MILDRED McELROY

A TALE OF STENOGRAPHIC LIFE

DOUGLAS GRAHAM

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Mildred McElroy

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A Tale of Stenographic Life

By

Douglas Graham

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Mildred McElroy.

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Mildred McElroy.

CHAPTER I.

A FUTURE STENOGRAPHER.

The wasting sunlight of a June day was kissing the dark green vines which overhung a white cottage in "The City of Elms" when a golden-haired girl came slowly up the flower-bordered walk. She was thinking, for the large blue eyes were downcast. She seated herself on the lower step of the porch, where her mother was sewing, and looked up at her sorrowfully.

"You are later to-night, Flora," said her mother; "did you have an examination to-day?"

"No, mother," answered the girl, "but we had a class meeting, and have decided to attend the commencement exercises over at the University to-night; but, mother, dear, I cannot think of going while father is so ill. I would be thinking of him through it all. Was the doctor here to-day?"

"Yes, Flora, but he thinks his condition has not changed in the least."

"Oh, mother," said the girl, "it seems to me that father's sufferings will never end in this world; and do you remember how he used to tell me that when I finished the High School I could go on to Radcliffe? And now commencement in a few days, and still no hope of father's getting well. It seems to me sometimes like a dream, and then I think of Malcolm's having to leave school, and he was so much brighter than I. I think it is hard, but when I think of him it tears my heart asunder," and the girl hid her head in her mother's lap and wept.

The girl's smothered sobs had awakened her father, who was resting on a couch in the cottage, and a cloud passed over the face of the sick man as he lifted his head from the pillow. His face was pale and thin and his limbs weak, for he was suffering from a tubercular disease, from which he knew there could be no recovery. He took his crutches and, unlatching the screen door, went to the child's side and, stroking her bonny head, said: "Nay, nay, my daughter; this will never make father better. It breaks his heart to see you take it so. Be of good cheer, my lass, and when the summer days are come again Donald Montgomery will be back on his beat, as spry as any of them."

The mother stole away to her household duties,

and in her heart she bore the burden of the thought of that blighted life whose whole course had been marked by naught but the stamp of love and sacrifice for his promising young family. Only a year ago he had been one of the bravest policemen in New Haven, but now affliction's unsympathizing hand had not waited—it had cut him down. The poor woman hastily prepared a few meagre dishes for the evening meal, and, calling Flora, said: "You can eat your supper before Malcolm comes, child, because he will not be home until late to-night, and if you are going you will have to hurry. It is after six now. You will want your white dress, and I must show you the bunch of lilies which Miss Marsden brought for you to wear. You should be thankful for good friends, my daughter; they are more to you than riches. This noble woman, who has been your teacher for four long years, seems to understand you better than your own mother does; yet I know it is for her dead sister's sake that she takes such an interest in you. She told me you had been sad all day, and that she half guessed your thoughts."

"You look fine, Flora," said her companion, who had come to go with her. "You must let your poor father see you to-night, even though you have to wake him. Then the doting school-

mate looped up the golden hair with white ribbons and after pinning the white lillies to the simple dress of snowy muslin, led her before the mirror, saying: "Just admire your beauty," and when Flora saw her reflection in the glass she felt a little thrill of pride, which she quickly suppressed, only remarking: "I will do."

Eight o'clock—and over Yale's green campus an army of black-clad students marched steadily into the chapel. There were more than two hundred of these stalwart, promising young fellows, and the grave look on the faces of many of them showed that sober thoughts now and then passed through their minds, as they realized they were taking their seats for the last time. College fraternities, clubs, class meetings, football and baseball games were at an end. College days were over.

The attention of the audience was much attracted by the class orator, a young man of scarcely twenty-two, whom his fellows had dubbed the "marvel" of their class. This was Willard McElroy. And it could not be denied that his was a strong, vigorous personality, one that was well fitted to receive these acknowledgements of his genius. He acquitted himself worthily, and there was not one of those appreciative people who had centered in that quaint, classic town on this event-

ful night who did not admire the young man who in their judgment possessed, without question, an exalted and elevated mind.

"Is he not beautiful?" whispered Flora to Miss Marsden, "and in what a graceful, charming manner he delivers his oration. How I wish Malcolm could be in his place. How proud mother would be of him!" The child's gushing admiration did not quite please the teacher, but she refrained from speaking to her in the way she at first felt inclined to do.

"Why, my dear," she answered, "it is singular you should think so of him. Your teacher's hobby is that little fat fellow over there, the class prophet."

"Oh! Miss Marsden," exclaimed Mildred zealously, "such a fellow as he would never figure in romance."

Romance—and just why a cloud passed over the face of Katherine Marsden a stranger could not have divined. Perhaps she was thinking of the time Willard McElroy's father stood in that very place years ago, for he, too, had been the orator of that year's law class.

"Yes, yes," thought the woman, "he left a vacant space in my young heart, and learned to love another, but I—I filled that vacuum by having access to the spring of knowledge, and years

have dulled that keen-edged liking which at one time in my life was sharp and bright."

But the teacher thought of Flora, thought of her as so different from herself. She feared that trusting, innocent soul would be lost in the glimmer of the shining footlights of the world's theatre ere it had reached the gate of womanhood.

"I will not say more to the child," she thought. "Flora never will, I am sure, meet Willard McElroy, and if she does, why should I think it? Should a son always inherit a father's frivolous, boyish wrong?"

CHAPTER II.

A BAFFLE IN THE BUSINESS WORLD.

"'Spose you can learn that stenography, sis?" was the boyish interrogation of Malcolm Montgomery.

"Oh, yes, Malcolm; I'll just have to learn it, that's all. Father can read a good deal to me, and I think I will leave the business college after next month, as all that is necessary now is dictation. But, Malcolm, it troubles me to know where I'll get work. There is nothing in New Haven."

"You know, Flora," answered the boy, "I'm certain that if I went down to New York this fall I could find something in this telegraphy 'round Wall street. It seems to me sometimes when I read about brokers making hats of money that I must be trying my hand at it, too. You know, sis, I believe if I had a chance on 'Change you would not need to work at such a thing as shorthand, and if I was only a little older I'd have you down in Cambridge at any rate."

"Ah! Malcolm, those are day dreams," said the golden-haired sister pensively. "We must

think of realities. I know you are ambitious, but father gets no better, and who knows but that our plans may be changed?" The face of the boy in the moments which followed seemed to have grown ten years older, such a solemn look did it assume, and, looking up at his sister, he said: "If I could get a job down there now, sis, I'd take it, and could get a place for you in New York sure, and then father and mother would come, and perhaps the sharing of our good success might restore father's health. Even though I worked at labor for awhile, Flora, until I got started it would be better than staying here working for this low pay. You must not get discouraged. You know I've worked six months as messenger, and 'tis a year now that I've been a helper, and I know I can take and send messages as good as any of those fellows, and New York is a first-rate place to work up from such a job. If I've been cut out of school myself, Flora, I don't want you to be. I hate the thoughts of your working in an office for one of those business duffers. I always thought you'd get something like school-teaching or proof-reading."

"How did you ever come to love me so, Malcolm?" said the girl proudly.

The boy with the wavy black hair and the gray eyes looked at her a moment and then sprang to

his feet and, pushing back the clusters of golden hair from his sister's forehead, said as he did so: "I cannot help it, sis; you are a dear girl and handsome as a picture."

He did not whistle as he walked quickly down the walk. No; for he was not glad. It was not alone the responsibility of his work which he carried on his shoulders, but his mother, sis, as he called her, and his sick father.

A few weeks more and Malcolm Montgomery was in the metropolis of the East, down in Wall street. He had finally secured a place as Board of Trade clerk, and the thought that the day was not far distant when he would be down in the pit bidding like the rest of them, his blood rising and falling to the surging heat of buying and selling stocks, animated the boy to do faithful, commendable work. "And," thought he, his face burning with enthusiasm, "I would always know just when to go 'long' and when to go 'short,' and always be able to prognosticate a 'slump.'

He had not been there long when he dropped in the mail box a letter for that sweet sister down in New Haven, a letter that was full of boyish enthusiasm, and in it Malcolm Montgomery told her he was waiting for her coming.

"Oh, mother, I'll be all right now," said Flora. "There will be no trouble about finding work in

New York. How I wish I could get into a law office, though, and maybe some day I could do reporting, and then what a sum of money I would earn!"

"It seems I cannot wait until to-morrow," were her added words, and at 4 o'clock of the following day Flora was in the waiting room of the Grand Central Station, in New York City.

"I'm so glad to see you, Flora," said the nineteen-year-old boy as he took her in his arms and kissed her. "I've been hungrily lonesome since I left home. How is father? I've a good job in sight for you—eight dollars a week in a law office. I saw the pastor of the church here and told him all about you and father's illness, and there were tears in his eyes when he promised to help me."

The next morning found Malcolm Montgomery and his sister on their way to an office on the fifteenth floor of one of New York's large office buildings. It was to a gray-haired lawyer with a kind, benevolent face that the independent boy, in his conventional way, introduced his young sister.

"How much learning have you?" said the man kindly. "I want a girl who will understand what I dictate to her."

"I have finished a classical course in the New Haven High School," said Flora, looking at him earnestly.

The lawyer listened with fixed attention, and then said: "Yes, I guess you will be all right. Even though you have had no experience in stenography, no doubt you'll be able to serve first-class. You have done well for your age."

"Yes," said the boy, "and if it had not been for reverses she'd never be here. If I earned three dollars more a week I'd have her in a college."

The lawyer tried to repress a smile at the boy's solicitude for his sister, and then he was thinking: "All boys needed assistance, but this boy seemed so ready to take on his shoulders someone's else burdens. Really he is a remarkable lad," thought the lawyer, "were he my son I should be as proud of him as I am of Willard."

"We may as well bring father and mother," said Malcolm to his sister a few weeks later. "I think I can rent a house quite cheap if I take time to look around, and with your eight dollars and my twelve that will just keep us nicely. It is so gratifying to me, Flora, to see you getting along so well."

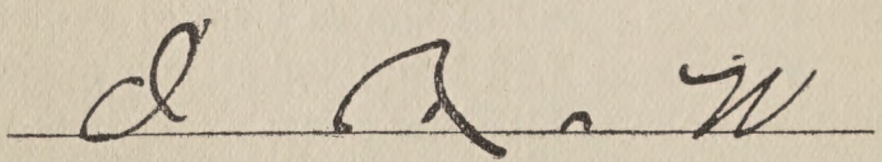
"And, Malcolm," said the sister, "the strangest thing happened to-day. Mr. McElroy's son came

to work in the office, and who do you think it was? The young man I saw last summer at commencement in Yale, who was the class orator; and, Malcolm, he is just as kind as he is beautiful looking. It is so nice to work for such people."

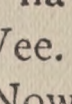
"Ah! sis," said the boy, his face darkening a little, "I would not put too much faith in those chaps, for sometimes they can say slick words and do not mean them."

The girl did not answer this time. She only looked a little wonderingly at her brother.

Two or three months after this incident Malcolm found on Flora's writing desk a slip of paper. She had a habit, the boy knew, of writing out whatever she thought upon deeply; but this time Malcolm was chagrined. It was in the mystic art:



The hieroglyphics would not speak. "It is all Greek to me," thought the boy, "but I'll read it if it is the last thing I do on earth. It seems she did not write her 'I' in shorthand, so 'I' to start with. Now for the next word. I'll have to get the textbook. —(—Lay; but I can't find anything that will tell me about that little tick; and the next

letter. I'll have to search the whole alphabet over.  Vee. And that little tick. By George, it's an o. Now, let's see: 'When a vowel is placed above a horizontal consonant, or to the left of any other, it is read before the consonant.' She's got that to the left of the last mark, so—'lov,' why—'Love' sure as the world. Now, that next little invisible thing. Guess I'll go back to the alphabet and see if I can find anything like that. Jingoes, this is identical: Yuh All I lack now is the name. But it's that lawyer's boy she has in mind all right enough; engaged to someone, maybe, that belongs in the millionaire's row. I know those guys too well, and sis is so reserved I hate to mention the subject to her.

"But I think she will tell me about his performances before long," thought Malcolm Montgomery.

CHAPTER III.

DECEPTION.

"I will not be gone over three months, Willard, and I think you will be able to get along all right. Miss Montgomery will be a world of help to you. The girl is ambitious, and I am sure if she continues to advance as rapidly as she has been doing she will make a business woman some day."

The young man said nothing, only nodded assent. In his father's absence, however, he went earnestly to work, for his was too noble a nature to allow any foibles to interfere with his faithful performance of the duties which devolved upon him.

Willard McElroy was a graduate from Yale in a literary and law course—a brilliant young man; yet there existed in his nature that which exists in the nature of so many of our so-called "brilliant young men"—an inclination to trifle with the affections of those who are less fortunate in their position in life. He confided in Flora, and related to her much concerning his college days, and when she told him of how she was among the high school students who were there

the night he graduated, and how grand she thought his oration, the young man looked at her earnestly and said: "You appreciated it, I know." And the girl believed that no one before had ever been able to forecast his future greatness, or ever could, as she had.

Willard McElroy did not count the trifling attentions he so often showed her, nor did he think them any more than mere kindnesses, but at each one Flora never failed to put down a black mark. How many times he stood with his arm on the back of the chair while she was writing out a paper and made some little suggestions, as: "If you will drop down another line, Miss Montgomery, before you write 'in the Circuit Court of Genesee County' it will look much better," and the girl did not know why her hand trembled when she did as he advised. Neither did the young lawyer exact of her hard work as had been his father's custom. Nay, it seemed to her he would do the task himself rather than suffer her staying beyond the usual hour.

Yet Willard McElroy's conscience was troubled. He was to marry an educated, aristocratic woman; social prestige was the young man's ambition, and, thought he, "it is presumption for a commonplace young woman to think I would stoop to marry her." Nor could he for a moment

number himself among that degraded class typified in "The Gypsy's Warning," and, as if in hope of relieving his troubled mind, he took from his pocket a letter on creamy white paper, about which the scent of violets lingered—and it was dated Vassar—for Helen Fairfax was a college senior.

"I must be careful," he thought, after he had read its pages, "that Flora does not see this." And why not Flora see this? Such a conscience—elastic enough to stretch over the ground of a chivalric lover—and yet Flora must not see your letter.

But Willard McElroy still struggled with the annoying thoughts: "I cannot see why she always looks to me to give her some encouragement, as if I were more to her than father. It cannot be that these little attentions which my generous heart cannot help giving could affect her so;" but the voice of conscience whispered that he must not indulge foolish fancies on the yielding mind of an inexperienced girl.

Flora had rarely, if ever, mentioned to that trusting brother or faithful mother anything of this young man who was fast filling up the vacant space in her young heart. Dear, deluded, unsophisticated child! She was only waiting for the time when Willard McElroy would ask her to

be his wife, and then what a joy it would be to her mother to know her daughter was to marry the son of a well-known New York lawyer. How much it would help to lift the burden from Malcolm's shoulders. "For," thought the girl, "Willard could not do all these things if he did not love me."

It was a dreary, rainy night in springtime, and Willard McElroy sat reading a letter which had come to him on the last post.

"I suppose that means that I am to be there in October," he mused. "I ought to write to Helen right away, for she will be anxious to know whether I got it or not." The "it" being a position of teaching political economy and government in a Detroit college. But all this was Willard McElroy's thoughts. He did not say aloud what was passing through his mind, for if he had it would have reached the ears of Flora Montgomery, who was in the adjoining room backing some legal papers.

"Oh, I do not just like this business life," she said wofully to herself, as she looked out upon the rain-washed expanse of Broad street. "I would rather have a beautiful home with someone to love me. How can any woman feel that there is anything really grand about such a life?"

And scarcely had these thoughts passed

through her mind when Willard McElroy came to the door.

"Are you going home to-night, Miss Montgomery?" he said.

"Oh, yes," said the girl, with a little start; "right away. I was only thinking."

"Thinking of what?" said the young man, as he drew near to the window by which the girl was standing. "Are you building one of those 'Palaces of Art?' Your work does not satisfy you of late."

Ah! what a mesmeric influence those black eyes and those softening words had upon the pliant mind so susceptible to drink in the flatteries of the vain world.

"The rain does not cease," said the lawyer, peering out at the increasing storm, "and you have no umbrella. Get your wraps and I will put you on the car."

Then Willard McElroy threw on his greatcoat, turned out the electric lights and assisted the young stenographer into the elevator. Once on the street, he held over her his heavy silk umbrella, while with his left arm he half carried her over the muddy cross-way.

No car was in sight, and he waited with her, and as he stood there beside her under the glare of the street lamps, a newsboy came round the

corner shouting the "New York Times," occasionally breaking the monotony of his cries by whistling snatches of the old song:

"Thou hast learned to love another,
Thou hast broken every vow,
We have parted from each other
And my heart is lonely now."

As the echoes of the song died away the girl looked timidly up at the young man, and in that look he felt a strange reproval—a reproval for what? He had loved no other besides Helen Fairfax. He had broken no love vows. But still his argumentative thoughts did not drive that look away. Nor did they ever. It had come to stay.

CHAPTER IV.

A BROKEN HEART.

"I will have to tell her," thought Willard McElroy. "I presume it would not be right to go away without doing so."

It was the 26th day of June, and his father was to have returned on that day.

"I wonder if 'twould be best to let her know I'm going to be married. I don't believe I will. Father will tell her after I am gone, and I think the most dignified way would be to mention nothing to her as to what I am going to do. I will only say to her that I am to go away, and perhaps she will think I will be in New York again after some time."

So Willard McElroy turned and looked furtively toward the room where the stenographer was working. Then he summoned up courage and opened the door in a businesslike way.

"I must say good-bye to you, Flora," he said, extending to her his hand.

"What—are you—are you going away?" said the girl, in a bewildered way.

"Yes, little lady, for a time anyway, I guess;"

and Willard McElroy tried in vain to answer gayly.

There were tears welling in her eyes at even the thoughts of his absence for some time, but this was not the worst. She made an effort to give him her slender little hand, but, being no longer able to conceal her grief, broke into a torrent of tears, and between her choked sobs said: "Oh, Willard, it seems to me that you are going forever."

"Why, child," said the young man, chagrined. "Come, do not act in this way. You are only lonesome and imagine you will be homesick after I leave. Come, brace up! it would not do for anyone to come in and find you crying. You will have a chance to make better friends than I am, and there's lots of time. You are only eighteen—that's all, Flora—why, just a little girl!"

But there was no need of further comment, and while the train was bearing him that afternoon far from New York City, he asked himself again and again: "Is it possible that she will never learn to forget me?"

Flora struggled on until the summer days were over, and one day just as autumn was beginning to cut out her jackets of yellow, scarlet and brown, she laid aside her pen and went to the desk of the gray-haired lawyer. "I think I need

a little rest, Mr. McElroy," said the girl, and the attorney answered hastily: "Yes, child; take two weeks. Why did I not think to tell you to take it before?" And in his heart he feared that rest would be forever.

And now the two weeks have passed and Flora has not returned. She nestles down among the white pillows, and in her hand she holds a small volume of Washington Irving's "Sketch Book." She is reading again the story of the broken-hearted English maiden and the dashing army officer.

"But the army officer did not have another," she murmured sadly, "and Willard has;" and as she lay here with the dying sun streaming in around her, in each one of its rays she sees painted each and every one of those deceptive attentions that had been lavished upon her such a short time ago. Again and again she tried to put the thought of him who bestowed them from her mind, but alas! she could not—she could not forget him.

"I wish mother would come and close the window," thought the girl; "I am so cold." She shivered and drew the coverlets closely around her, not knowing that the chill which was tightly clutching her weak body was the attendant of consumption.

"And the dead leaves out there," she continued thinking, "why can it be that the leaves are withered already, faded and fallen upon the earth's worn, gray carpet—the leaves that just a little while ago covered the trees, and now they are red, bright red and scarlet, and scattered all round their rootlets. How I wish it would rain again like it did that night! Why did he talk so to me? Why did he care whether my work satisfied me or not?" and the girl buried her face in her white flannel gown and wept.

She was sleeping quietly when her brother Malcolm returned home, and did not waken when he bent eagerly over her and scanned her white face.

"Oh, mother! mother!" sobbed the boy in low tones of anguish, "why did I ever bring Flora here? She was too young, but yet why did we have so much trouble? Oh! he was a miserable wretch. I can forgive anything but that. No, she will never get well. I see it. It was all that killed father. He saw her dying by inches ever since Willard McElroy went away. Is there such a thing as justice? Oh! will God ever right these grievous wrongs?"

And the boy flung himself down by the bedside of his sister, and bitter tears washed his young face.

Flora's head stirred upon the pillows, and she opened her eyes amazedly upon the boy's tear-stained face. "Why do you weep, Malcolm, when I am so happy, so happy? I never liked it very well; stenography, I mean. It would have been so much better if I could have stayed in school. But can you find my notebook? I think there is a letter in it I never wrote out. And, dear brother, I dreamed last night I was back in New Haven, and I could see the elm tree at our front door, under which I so often studied my lessons. Oh! I could see it so plainly, and how I wanted to be there again, away from it all. I could see so many of my schoolmates, and they were all in college, and I longed so to be with them. I thought I was in the chapel again, and that we were singing 'Some Time We'll Understand.' Oh, then I thought I understood, but now I know that that is yet for me to learn. I dreamed, too, Malcolm, that the Willard McElroy I saw at commencement that night was someone else, and that he was not deceiving—that he was like you," and the girl's eyes closed and she sighed wearily.

"Flora's mind wanders so, mother," said the boy, half choked with sobs. "I fear she's worse than we know anything about."

"No, Malcolm," answered his mother, "the doctor said this morning she had not near the fever she had yesterday."

"Mother," continued the boy, "you must rest to-night, and I will get some of the neighbors to stay with me. I cannot bear to leave Flora's side; she is so restless. At times to-night I thought she did not know me."

So the boy watched while his mother slept—watched over that fair, sweet sister, and once when she laid her hand in his, looking up at him so wearily, a great rent was torn in the boy's heart, but he could not weep—for his mother's sake.

"I am so happy, Malcolm, so happy," she repeated again. "There'll be no more of it. Do not keep the notebook or anything I had there—it will make you sad—just my diploma from New Haven, for I loved that, and if you ever see him forgive him—Mother"—and the girl hardly knew anyone. "My mother, Malcolm, Wil—" and the golden head in the boy's arms was rigid.

"Flora," sobbed the brother, but his warm lips were only pressed against a frigid brow.

They took her back to New Haven, to lay her at rest in one of those lonely churchyards which is hid in the Connecticut Valley. She was clothed in the same white gown she wore the day Willard graduated, so like her young, pure soul, and the slender hands were crossed upon the breast that once heaved and sighed for him who had so wronged her.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR'S MURDER.

And now ten years have passed since Flora Montgomery's death—ten years since Willard McElroy and his bride stepped upon the gangway of the Steamer Felix, in New York Harbor, on their return from their wedding trip, which had been spent on the violet kissed sod of "Merrie England," and from that day to this nothing had tended to make him unhappy, for when children came to bless his hearthstone he loved Helen even more. The picturesque cottage in the suburbs of the "City of the Straits" was everything but discontentment to him, and with Helen and the prattling baby faces in it what more in life was there to ask for?

It was a promising future which Willard McElroy had pictured before him, but as he sat in his library on this particular morning he invariably lifted his eyes from the Blackstone he was reading, and a worried look stole over his countenance. If he could have asked a question it would have relieved him, for Willard McElroy's mind had been thrown into a chaos over an incident of the night previous.

While eating dinner with a small company of friends in the Cadillac Hotel, in Detroit, he had noticed at the table adjoining them two brokers, who were much absorbed in a conversation on wheat. After some time the elder of the two left the cafe and the Professor found the eyes of the younger broker set upon him keenly, almost fiercely. "Where have I seen such an individual?" thought Willard McElroy. "And what does he mean by assuming such a diabolical attitude? If it were only a passing, interested look I would not notice; but there is something more behind it." The gray eyes still pierced his very soul and sent cold shudders through his veins, and he was relieved when the tall, black-clad man arose, and, after tipping the waiter with a coin, departed.

"I am racking my brain about that again this morning," thought the Professor, "and I must forget it." He opened his book again and almost unaware his hand touched a folded parchment. Upon opening it he immediately recognized it as a paper he had once dictated in his father's law office, in New York City, so many years ago. Yes, and it brought back the memory of someone else, too—that golden-haired stenographer who had taken it down. Then suddenly the Professor's face grew white as ashes.

"Her brother—she had a brother, but he was only a boy then. Yet years have passed. A broker—he was then a clerk on Wall street. Could it be possible? I had never wanted to know more—"

And the Professor was glad to be called to breakfast; but his wife did not understand his distracted manner, and interrupted his thoughts with the same interrogation for the second time: "Has your class been having an examination this week, Willard?"

"No, Helen, examinations next week; and do not expect me home to-night," he added after a moment's pause. "I promised Prof. Girard by wire yesterday I would come down to Ann Arbor to-night." Then he mechanically bade his wife good-bye, turned and walked slowly down the pathway.

"Yes, she thought because I noticed her a little that I was in love with her," the Professor murmured, but the picture only loomed up the brighter. He could not put it away. It haunted him—the white face with the innocent, trusting blue eyes could not be forgotten. The wicker gate responded to his touch and in its creak he heard a melancholy sound which made him think of long ago. The struggling rosebuds looked up at him from their grassy pillows and shook the

dew-drops from their thin petals like tears upon the earth below as if to shed them for rash and unforgiven acts of days gone by.

And when he entered the college chapel they were singing:

"Cast thy burden on the Lord."

"But," thought the professor, "those words are for the Christians, and I am not even a sinner. Never have I thought until now on what constitutes a true Christian spirit. It never seemed to me that I had led anything but a blameless life, but I see now many faults in it—many, that would mark it as far from being blameless."

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

He was hearing again the usual morning Psalm.

"Does that mean," thought Willard McElroy, "that I shall not want for comfort?"

And throughout the day he still thought of those times when he had been a thoughtless youth, and how he spurned as a man what he had gloated over as a boy! "Oh! what would Helen McElroy think—my wife, the most considerate of women! She, who always leaned upon me with a noble woman's pride, because she thought my nature one capable of doing no weak, small act. I can almost hear her say: 'You have a child of your own, Willard, and were you called from

this earth 'ere your time was scarcely up, you could only ask God to protect him from the cruel world that is ever ready to do as you have done.' "

But Helen McElroy did not know it. She never would. "Yet," thought the professor, "I should not allow my conscience to be smitten by trying to recall memories of something which I did, almost not knowing it was wrong. I never told her that I loved her, and really did nothing which would make her think so; but when I think of her being dead it hurts me. And the poor child once told me of her father's illness and of how she wanted to go on to school, but I did not give a moment's consideration then to what she said. I was not charitable enough to show her even friendship. Yes, I wounded her child's heart in a brutal way."

Long after the gas was lighted the professor worked at his desk. "I wish I had not promised Prof. Girard I would come," he thought. "I hate to travel on such nights. They are fit to be spent only by one's fireside."

And if Willard McElroy had seen the tall form who followed close behind him on the day previous, when he approached the Postal's operator's desk to send the Ann Arbor message, and if he could have seen the stranger as he bent his

ear to catch the language of the sounder, he might have had gloomy forebodings of venturing out into the night's dreary blackness alone.

"I did not know it was so late"—and the professor glanced at an M. C. train schedule. "Only thirty minutes"—and he hastily put on a mackintosh and, taking up his hat and umbrella, left immediately.

Black clouds rose over the city; a storm was approaching. "I wish I had taken a cab," he thought, as he neared the railroad station, where for more than three rods the highway was thickly studded with trees and shrubs. A horseman appeared in the darkness. A deadly bullet flashed from a revolver, and Willard McElroy was with his Maker.

Will the sins of inexperienced years be forgiven; or, will their revenge be visited on the heads of his innocent children?

CHAPTER VI.

A DESOLATE HOME.

When the torrent of rain had subsided, and the gray dawn was breaking its way through the dark grove of trees where the professor lay murdered, a night watchman returning home from his work stumbled upon something dark lying by the roadside. He stopped—his face pallid with terror—could it be—it surely was Willard McElroy, whose home was in the same suburb. The murdered man's face was stained with patches of blood from the cruel wound, and his hair was disheveled by the night wind.

Breathless, the watchman ran to find someone who would tell the terrible news to the wife of this unfortunate victim; for someone must be there to console her—someone to offer condolence. But, ah! will consolation alleviate that sharp sting which death ever brings with it when it asks for admittance? Is there such thing as consolation only for the hard of heart? From those souls in which God has placed the silver bow of feeling and the golden cord of love you can never lift the sorrow. Let them weep it out

alone! In after years it will call forth prayers for the long departed.

Then could they soothe this faithful, trusting woman? Could they wipe away the thought that he would never come again? She only shrinks back, her face livid, and the thought of the night previous, with its moaning wind, making a direful, mournful music which kept rhythm to the falling leaves only seems to deepen her sorrow! "Death," she thought "had called him, and he had never returned to his religion. He had talked much of it of late. Oh! why did God take him before his soul had been fitted to meet its Maker?"

The children cried and called for "papa," but the mother heard them not. She had sunk into a delirium and on the third day after his death the world was still to her an oblivion. She knew not that in the room below, he, whom she had loved for a lifetime, was sleeping, and that above his coffin these words were being read:

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

Nor did the faintest echo of that saddest of all sad hymns fall upon her ear—"Nearer, my

God, to thee, e'en though it be a cross that raiseth me."

A few weeks later a dear friend reasoned thus with this grief-stricken widow:

"Helen, Uncle Joe has been here many times, and the dear old man is heartbroken for you. You ought to be thankful to have him to look to. I know your affliction is great, but have not others borne sorrow? Your children are here; you must live for them. You will have a good home with Uncle Joe, and his life has been very lonesome since his dear wife's death. You can close the cottage for a time until you are more resigned to arrange matters, and go there immediately."

But why does not Helen McElroy look to father or mother in this bereavement? Shortly before the death of her husband, his father, the New York attorney, died a bankrupt. And Helen McElroy's parents—they have long since been dead.

Just before the breeze of the Great Rebellion was stirred into a whirlwind, a Northern man invaded the home of a Virginia planter, and carried with him to the New York hills a beautiful Southern bride. No rasher act could have been performed—no worse crime could have been

committed in the eyes of the proud young Southerner, who looked upon the husband of his sister as an enemy of all who were dear to him. And his anger was cherished, each victory of the North fanning it into a higher fury.

Peace at last—and the soldier turns his thoughts toward home. Home, his loved childhood home in ruins, and in this hour of repentance he is longing for his sister, his only sister. He writes a letter to a friend to learn of her whereabouts, and the woman replies, enclosing a note, the last one written to her by his sister; it ran:

"Captain Fairfax, my husband, is in Tennessee."

With tear-stained eye the soldier looked at the worn, faded paper. It was the same familiar hand—Tennessee—"Shiloh," repeated the man, "my sister's husband must have been in that battle; and among the many who sleep on the bank of that dark river he knows is Capt. Fairfax."

The war record reveals the truth of his imagination. His fears are realized, for Capt. Fairfax, of New York city address, is on the death list of Shiloh.

In a few days he is in the metropolis of the "Empire State." He has found the suburb; the street; the number—a cottage overhanging with

vines. He knocks on the door. His heart beats. He thinks he can hear his sister's footsteps. 'Tis the month of May, and the birds are singing on blossom-buried bows. A sweet, childish voice falls upon his ear. He turns, and in the pathway a childish vision of beauty greets him. "Grandma's in the garden," she says, pointing a delicate finger in that direction, and runs forth to bring her. The old man sinks down upon his knees—"My sister's child," he murmurs, "but, oh! my sister——." Then the dear old lady tells him the story of the child's mother who is laid away in Mount Auburn, and of her only son, Capt. Fairfax.

It is from this time that Uncle Joe McDowell, who is no other than this Southern man, has cared for Helen Fairfax until we found her leaving Vassar and the wife of Willard McElroy.

CHAPTER VII.

UNCLE JOE'S COMING.

The goldenrod and the asters which grew about the old gray-gabled house on the McDowell homestead were dying; the large red-cheeked Northern Spy and the dull brown russet were drooping silently upon the withered earth; wild geese were soaring slowly across freshly-plowed fields toward sun-kissed havens, and crows and rooks cawed gloomily on barren hickory branches and spread their great wings against the gray-threaded visage of an Indian summer sky, for it was autumn.

Loads of apples stood in the orchard waiting for the mill; the cribs were bursting with yellow ears and from the barn could be heard the currying of sleek-coated, long-maned horses that munched greedily at grain and sweet clover; and on the cold stillness of the autumn morning fell the creaking of the barn-yard gate as the men pushed through with brimming pails of milk. Then suddenly the breakfast bell gave one clang which almost seemed to sever the frosty band which was holding together the half-sun-touched world.

Farmer McDowell sat down to the simple morning meal, and the men noticed that a cheerful look had replaced the sad one which had rested on his face ever since his wife Margaret's death. He realized, too, that in many ways the household had missed the careful hand of his good wife. The boards of the kitchen floor did not shine as of old like so many slabs of snow, and on the side-boards were many broken pieces of china and glass, where once they stood in neat rows glittering and sparkling.

"I am going to bring Helen and the children over home to-day, boys," said the old man, as he held out his cup for more coffee. "I am going to show Helen what country life can do for her. The poor girl has just been weighed down with trouble since Willard died. You remember little Mildred, Dan," he continued, addressing one of the men; "the dear, little thing makes me think of poor Margaret every time I look into her violet eyes. Have some dinner prepared," he said to the cook, as he rose from the table, "we will be home about seven o'clock," and half an hour later the spirited horses were taking the farmer swiftly away from the farm-house. Over roads paved with variegated leaves, they carried the old-fashioned buggy and before noon the pretty white cottage was reached.

When the sound of the vehicle was heard on the driveway the children ran out to meet him, followed by their mother, who was dressed in a simple black gown.

"Why, Helen," said the farmer, trying to suppress the sorrow which was rising in his heart at seeing her burst into tears; "nay, my girl, what a way to act when the fairest blossoms in the country round are yours;" and Uncle Joe lifted the boy and girl in his arms and kissed them tenderly.

It was a long, wearisome day that he spent arranging everything for Helen McElroy's departure, for there were times when it almost seemed to her she could do nothing which would break her association with her home; but when looking on the children, it brought to her mind hopes of better and brighter days, so the poor woman worked earnestly, and ere evening fell and the key was turned in the door of her home, she was reconciled to her lot.

Upon sunny, sandy acres stood the McDowell homestead, reigning regal over the many beautiful farms in Wayne County. Its level, rolling fields were watered by a broad creek, whose banks the wild rose graced, throwing to its current in the burning heat of summer Midas-like petals, and in winter asking protection from its

ice bands. Along the broad, sloping lanes and the driveway leading by one side of the farm-house the mammoth oak, the weeping willow and the modest beech and maple flourished.

It was here in these delightful haunts that a new life for Helen McElroy had begun, a life whose days were long and restful, and which spoke not of turmoil nor of strife, but whispered of ever-pending omens, of consolation and of peace. It was here that Mildred and Robert were reared, their young souls drinking in all the pleasures which befall happy, wholesome child-life on the farm—not even vaguely realizing anything of the strenuous life of the mighty city; but upon their mother's heart, each year was falling with a heavy thud, for their educational advantages were meager, and she could in no way see a means of securing the money which it would take to educate them. When the district school was completed, they could go to the village academy of ten grades, but even this would be an exertion. And how much Willard McElroy had thought of doing for them when he lived. Did he see her struggle to do for them now?

Helen McElroy could only wait, the lines of trouble slowly deepening on her brow, while the boy Robert grew more manly, his every look and

action bespeaking his father, and the girl Mildred every day became more womanly and touched the mother's heart with pride.

CHAPTER VIII.

ECLECTIC SHORTHAND.

"View in these pages like a mirror bright
That art divine, now bursting on your sight;
Trace in each page the ready writer's mind—
'Tis here his shorthand secrets are defin'd."

Before Mildred McElroy had reached the age of fifteen years she had begun to realize what few do until they are nineteen or twenty; what it means to solve the problem of how to earn a livelihood; but it was all because Mildred's brother Robert might finish a college course that she and her mother had struggled so hard and made so many sacrifices. From childhood he had shown a particular aptitude for drawing and mathematics and was pursuing a course in the State Agricultural College, which would fit him to be a mechanical draftsman. Mildred did her part in an unselfishness of spirit, knowing that when Robert had completed his work he would obtain a good position and then she would be repaid liberally.

But what could she do to help him even more than she was now doing? She had graduated

from the village school and there yet remained two long years before she would be seventeen—old enough to teach in the district schools. It seemed out of the question for her to wait until she would be that old, when even a day seemed a long, long century to her in this feverish stage of her young life. She racked her brain to think of the different avenues which furnished a means of earning money; yet many of them she knew to be barred from women. Stenography! She had heard of women engaging in this profession and had conceived the idea somewhere that sometimes there were fabulous salaries paid to its practitioners. To learn it, though, without someone's assistance—this was the difficulty which confronted her.

She went to her room and took from her desk a circular which she had received during the week past from a business college in Detroit; but she found the tuition excessive, which made her going out of the question. Yet Mildred was bound to execute her plans. She would find the name of the text-book which they used and try to learn the art by self-study. She had read Charles Dickens' David Copperfield, and if David learned it well enough to do Parliamentary Reporting she saw no reason why she would not be able to learn it to do office work. She did

not procrastinate either, and wrote an order for a text-book in Eclectic Shorthand that very day —but unknown to anyone else. She did not tell Robert or her mother, for she was sure they would think a failure would only be the result of such an undertaking.

She scarcely waited a week's time after sending for the book before going to the post office. She threw her saddle upon the black colt and hurried away down the country road, and when she saw the eleven o'clock mail train sweeping through from the East, she was sure her package was on it, and urged him on the faster.

"The mail, please, in 'Box 42,'" she said to the postmaster, and he handed her out a brown packet, on whose left-hand corner was stamped: "Scott, Foresman & Co., Educational Publishers, No. 378 Wabash avenue, Chicago, Ills." It was the coveted book. She tucked it in beside her on the saddle and rode home faster than she had ever done in her life. She wondered, too, if the neighbors did not notice that she was riding fast, and if they did not know it was because she was hurrying home to learn her first lesson in shorthand.

She gazed at the horizontal, forward slant and back slant lines—lines that she was to lengthen, shorten and dimish almost to minuteness; but

she would master the alphabet she thought in a day, and she gave herself just one week in which to acquire the principles. Then would begin the writing of words. She practiced upon the letter "A." She made it thus: (when it was followed by 'p' or 'b' and made it so ten times, but no sooner was she down-stairs before she had forgotten whether it went upward or downward. She tried to make it with her finger on the plate —then on the tablecloth; but those who sat at the table with her were beginning to notice her strange actions, and she tried it in despair on her dress. She was sure that it went upward, thus: l and made it similarly one hundred times. She finished her lunch hastily and opened her text-book again, but alas, for unrewarded efforts! she should have written her character downwards.

But the weeks went on, and those principles which she thought to have mastered in seven days she still regarded in a dazed sort of way. Yet she struggled away at them unceasingly and 'ere they were half placed in her mind she thought of dictation. She did not begin by taking down easy reading, but tried the hardest and most difficult class of literature, and then the reading back—the mystic characters refused to speak when cold.

But Mildred persevered when she saw that

she was slowly getting the system into her head and into her fingers, and her last effort would be to train both to work together. She copied editorials in the newspaper and read her shorthand characters an endless number of times until the words became as plain to her as print. She read, too, with the keenest interest, all the books which she could obtain on shorthand literature: "High Speed and How to Attain It;" T. A. Reed's "Technical Reporting," "The History of Shorthand," etc. She would get Court Reporting, she thought, after two or three years' practice at the longest. She could see herself taking the most difficult testimony of medical experts, and when the judge or attorney asked for a repetition of some part of it, she imagined herself leaning back in her chair and reading her notes with such ease and rapidity that they could follow her words. Then after a Court position had been obtained it would only be a matter of six months or so until she would be reporting a clergyman who would talk quite as rapidly as Philip Brooks did when Thomas Allan Reed followed him with note-book and pencil, although her brain whirled a little when she thought of writing 213 words per minute for half an hour.

She thought of the National Service—and only five years until she would be old enough to write

it. She would be sure to pass it, too, on a high mark and to get an appointment—and such a remuneration as would be the result of this work. There would be no trouble about getting through a University then.

And when she thought of all these bright promises and in the hazy distance of the future dreamed of their realization, her simple life upon the farm became monotonous—that life which gave her no assurance that brighter days would come. Would she ever become a stronger and a greater woman under these conditions? How sadly it compared with the city's ostentation of splendor and magnificence! This was the child's version; she knew not what this rural training was doing for her; teaching her to know people as they really exist, the philosophy, as it were, of humankind; imparting to her the power to think and reason upon the great problems of life which have all had their beginning here.

And has not your childish philosophy ever revealed to you, Mildred, what you will encounter in the stenographic world—that world where no qualifications are fixed, where you are left to struggle with the just and the unjust?

Can you breast the tide of its never-ceasing, surging difficulties until at last the bark of success floats you triumphantly to a sure and safer harbor of this trying sphere?

CHAPTER IX.

A BROTHER'S DEATH.

Mildred was still taking dictation with great zeal in the firm belief that she would be able to obtain a position in stenography which would enable her to lend Robert the money of which she knew he would be so much in need in his senior year.

It was now vacation time, and as Robert had become deeply interested in Mildred's work, he read a great deal to her during the long summer afternoons. To-day Mildred had selected Ian Maclaren's "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush and Other Sketches" for dictation exercises, and marked out that touching chapter—"A Scholar's Funeral." Was it the extreme sadness which these lines incite upon almost every reader of this Scotch story which caused Robert's voice to grow unsteady as he read? But why should he turn his face from her as if in an attempt to restrain a dry, choking cough which she had never before noticed—and just, too, as he had reached that paragraph which runs:

"His peasant mother stood beside the body of

her scholar son, whose hopes and thoughts she had shared, and through the window came the bleating of distant sheep. It was the idyl of Scottish University life."

In the weeks which followed Mildred saw that Robert's strength was slowly, surely failing. The cough which at first was only slight, became now more frequent and he no longer tried to suppress it. Day by day he grew weaker, and the slightest task necessitated a long rest. It was then that Mildred saw the dark, unwavering shadow which was stealing about the homestead—a shadow which she feared would never be lifted until it drew away in its death grasp a dear one. Never before had it dawned upon her that this frail nineteen years of boyhood life was only to be compared to a flower in a hot-bed, which, when the first cold breath of winter strikes it, withers and dies. But Robert's mind had been overladen when Mildred never knew, for no one realized more than he how much had been given up for him—all in order that the expenses which fall to college life might be met.

And now each day she watched his face grow whiter, his hands thinner, and his voice less firm and at times almost inaudible. With his departure from his accustomed work the welcome, cheerful sounds so peculiar to rural life seemed

to assume a melancholy anguish. The birds twittered plaintive notes from their withered nests and then one by one left the orchard and the garden to lead their young on their first journey to the Southland; the robin alone tarried longest, to sing upon the white rosebush near the doorway a farewell song—just for condolence. The pollen-laden bees stirred lazily the air which wafted in through the windows on whose sills the first creamy white chrysanthemums bloomed, diffusing their fragrance through the room like incense in a chancel.

The raindrops fell upon the roof and dropped from the eaves like clods of clay upon a newly-closed coffin. The evening sunlight's roseate hues faded in the valleys like flickering flames of red candles over the rites of departed; at twilight the cattle wound their way with slower step across the grass-grown meadows up to the farmyard; the katy-did's song became longer and louder; and from the distant hillsides came the sound of the sheep-bell's twinkling notes, falling upon the ear with the sadness of a funeral dirge.

The summer deepened, and the winds wrested the dry leaves from the trees and carried them afar through the air to welcome in the autumn. Then when September's last morning-glory had brought her young life to a close the fruit hung

heavy down from the trees—Autumn's gift from Summer's promise. College days had really come, but Robert was not with them, nor would he ever be. Mildred shuddered as she glanced at the pallid face which looked at her dreamily, as if to say: "O Death in life, the days that are no more." She drew away, but Robert laid his hand upon her arm and said: "You must know it, Mildred; you must know it. I cannot live. For weeks I have known I should have gone, but now November's veil is lifted and still I live. Each time I think of the campus grounds and of how the boys are hard at work, while I am only waiting with clasped hands for others to work for me, I ask that God be merciful and take me. You will not need me so much now, Mildred; I have ceased to worry for you, and that is why I can die happy. I only regret that I have taken so much; that mother has placed so many hopes in me, for it has been for naught—only to be swallowed in the grave."

"O! Robert, Robert!" exclaimed Mildred, "do not talk so to me. You will not die. You must not leave me."

But Robert could not answer. His grief was too great for tears. Mildred could not bring herself to realize that there was such a thing as death. There was death she knew which comes

to old age, but this—this would be an untimely death. Yet, she knew it to be Robert's lot—Robert in whom their mother had placed her whole soul. She must bury Robert. She must bow under the gentle yet seemingly harsh rod of the Creator.

From a dull, gray sky streaked with shafts of ruddy light, late autumn's sun was sinking when the parish minister gently consoled her mother. "You have Mildred left," this was about all the man could say, this man who put his trust in the will of the Almighty.

Mildred sat by his bedside hour after hour, only to wait. She laid her hand upon the blue-veined brow and passed her fingers through the damp, clustering curls, yet it did not wake him. She could not see why his sleep should be so long, so heavy. Why should the fingers which touched hers grow clammy? And the brow—its warmth was giving way to coldness—she shrank back—her head fell—not from Robert, but from Death.

And now he had passed from this earth forever. It seemed only a few short hours since he had ceased to speak, yet Death had allotted all the time it ever gives.

A hushed silence followed, while every one moved noiselessly about clad in sober garments,

yet Mildred could not think it was for Robert. She watched the long line of carriages which stopped before the gate; the undertaker who drove quietly the snow-white horses underneath a weeping willow, and opened softly the doors of the hearse, which she could not believe was for Robert. The fall wind threw a few yellow, blood-dappled leaves upon a white coffin which a group of college seniors bore sadly, and the white face and the closed gray eyes—whose were they —whose were they—but Robert's?

She moved away, moved with the rest clothed in the shield of mourning. They passed the white school-house on the hill, and all was silent; its bell pealed forth not e'en a requiem note, nor did the faintest line of an afternoon shadow seem to break its melancholy stillness; and well it might not, for the dear old place was cherishing in its bosom a grief for one who, now departed, once moved about it long, and who was this one but Robert?

They formed a long procession beside the village church, and just before they carried him within its open doors the bell tolled out its eighteenth stroke, and who had it been for but Robert? They passed by the seat where he had sat throughout his boyish years, and did not stop, but took him to a spot where all who loved him

might gather fondly 'round, for 'twas his last day here.

The clergyman in gravest tones read from the cherished book: "In my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

And now the village choir sing in tranquil notes: "Jesus is there, he has gone to prepare a mansion of heavenly love."

Out among the white stones to a spot about whose freshly-disturbed earth the shadows were flitting they bore his casket. Its ropes were lowered, and upon the filled-in earth the white doves which wheeled and circled reverently over his father's tombstone looked peacefully and then flapped their broad wings as if to journey heavenward to ask a benediction on an added grave.

CHAPTER X.

THINKING OF GETTING A START.

"It has been a year, mother," said Mildred, since Robert died."

The poor woman started at the mention of the grief which she had been trying to suppress for so long, scarcely comprehending why her daughter should speak of it in this manner; and no one knows the struggle which took place in Mildred's heart as she tried to begin anew what she had planned to tell her mother of going to work. Each time she tried to speak she saw the new-made grave at the foot of the hillside and fresh memories came rushing back of him who now slumbered peacefully beneath the narrow plot of ground.

"Yes, mother," continued Mildred, "it has been a year since Robert died, and I must try and get work. We have had so much trouble and expense and cannot expect Uncle Joe to stand for everything; besides, what he has does not belong to us. I do not think I would have any trouble in getting a certificate, for I passed the last examination, all but arithmetic, and got a pretty fair

mark in general history and algebra; but I can work only eight months in the year at teaching, and in stenography could work full time."

"Yes, dear," answered her mother; "I am willing you should do anything you think you are fitted for, but you are sure of teaching if you get your certificate, and stenography is uncertain. Then, too, you have had no experience, and there seems to be no chance of your getting anything here in W———."

"I might go to Aunt Mary's in Grand Rapids," said Mildred, "and even though I worked for four or five dollars a week at first it would give me a start." Her mother's face grew sadder as she noted the sigh which escaped from the child's lips at the mention of "Aunt Mary's," who was her father's sister, a widow, who lived in fashionable style in Michigan's great manufacturing city, with her two children, one a child of twelve, the other sixteen—one year Mildred's junior.

"I do not like to have you go there," said her mother. You do not dress as well as they do, and you know your aunt is not a considerate woman; but if it is the best that can be done, my child, we will think only of its bright side."

"Ah! if Robert were only living," thought Mildred, "I would not have to ask favors of these uncharitable relatives; yet I must not think of this

now. I must be brave. It will be lonesome for poor mother alone, and I am young and should be able to endure these hardships."

A few more days passed and filled the link between September and October. Mildred had rented a type-writer from the F. S. Webster Co., Chicago, for four months and the rental was due this month. Statements of account, bills, invoices, deeds, legal and commercial papers of all kinds had been copied and recopied until she thought herself quite proficient. Then she sat down to write a letter to her Aunt Mary previous to her departure:

"Dear Aunt Mary:

"I have not answered your last letter, and am almost ashamed of my negligence; but mother and I have been heartbroken since Robert died and have not thought of anything. No doubt you will be surprised to know that I have learned shorthand during this year and believe I would do pretty well at it if I could get started. It is foolish to think of obtaining work in W———, so if you think best I believe I will come down next week and see what I can do. I hope Regina and Maude are in school and that you, Aunt Mary, are enjoying good health. Tell Uncle Will and Aunt Carrie I am coming, and ask little Agnes if she remembers Cousin Mildred.

"With best wishes, I am your loving niece,

"Mildred."

Does any individual exist who does not know the effect of such a letter when the mail carrier has placed it in the hands of a rich relative?

There was now only three days left in which to pack the trunk and get everything in readiness to go. Mildred had told her plans to no one except her mother, but that night, when she sat down to dinner, she made known to Uncle Joe her desire to leave. He listened to all she said, and then his eyes rested on the chair made vacant not long ago by the death of the boy whose future had been so promising, and he thought sadly—"It seems I cannot part with her." He had been young once, though, as young as she was, and again he heard the drums beating and was marching to the echoes of martial strains through the flowery fields of the States which border on the Gulf. The poor man's supper was unfinished, but he pushed back his chair, and said: "Yes, Mildred, we will try to do without you."

Mildred stole away from the table and heard him telling her mother again that old, old Southern story.

The autumn wind whistled through the newly-cut corn shocks, and the full moon shone down gloriously on the yellow pumpkin, which clung longingly to the broad, frost-nipped leaves and rugged vine. She felt for the first time a throb of sorrow at leaving the farm.

She did not sleep much that night, for in her dreams she saw her mother's anxious face. From what she had read, Mildred knew they expected more of people now-a-days than years ago, and somehow her mother did not seem to understand this, Mildred thought, and she dreaded to tell her, for she knew how much she would fear for her.

The day came at last on which she was to go. She put on her brown dress and a linen collar, and how she wished she had a pair of kid gloves, but the cotton ones would do. The white kitten purred on the rug near the door, and the canary bird in its cage on the porch sang sweeter than ever—almost plaintively, Mildred thought—but she smothered it all, and turning, with tears in her eyes, bade her mother good-bye.

It was all over. A few hours and she was in Grand Rapids—Daring to think she would have success.

CHAPTER XI.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

The sight of those massive furniture factories, standing tall and smoke-covered against the sky, aroused in Mildred's heart a new hope—a hope which she cherished and trusted that she would realize. "Surely," she thought, as she changed her small satchel from one hand to the other, "I can obtain work in some one of these factories that employ so many if I am willing to work for four or five dollars per week;" but, Mildred, that four or five dollars is a fortune to you now, and the world knows it, and has always known it. It is not so easily gotten in the stenographic field or any other.

She was now on Cedar street, nearing the brown-stone house in which her aunt lived. When Mildred rang the bell her aunt was sewing in an adjoining room, and wondered who it could be that was making such a late afternoon call. Some measure of love lingered in her heart for her own flesh and blood, so there was a trifle of cordiality in the manner in which she greeted her niece. She took Mildred's valise and umbrella

and bade her be seated while she told her how anxious she had been to see her and her mother again after Robert's death.

Mildred's aunt was typical of the rich widow, whose nature is characterized by hautiness and avarice. She was a close follower of fashion, and did not go out to market even until she had tried on several garments to ascertain which looked best; but that the woman should be so interested in worldly things was not strange, since her marriage had been more of a matter of business than of love.

She talked to Mildred, though, much in the way she thought it was her duty to do, and told her she thought she would be able to get a situation easily enough. "You can board with me," she remarked, "but you, of course, cannot expect to stay anywhere for nothing." There were pangs of regret coursing through Mildred's heart even now, and she wished she had not come.

When the children returned from a shopping tour down town they greeted Mildred as children will, and Regina forgot her malice and told her of her good times at boarding school. She went up-stairs and showed her new fall gown, and insisted that Mildred try it on—"I know it would be an awful becoming color," she said, pleasantly, for Mildred's personal magnetism

was fast overcoming the prejudices aroused by her mother.

Regina accompanied Mildred the next day to register with a large desk company, and while they sat waiting for the head stenographer to consider the application Mildred's face grew pale as she saw how swiftly some of the stenographers worked, and yet were drawing only the meager sum of three or four dollars per week. Mildred continued making personal applications in different firms, but was informed in each one that they did not want beginners. "They are too hard to break in," was the added comment.

Just at the time, however, when she was most enthusiastic in her efforts to obtain employment Mildred's relatives were surprised by a rather unexpected visit from her Aunt Mary's sister-in-law from the "Windy City." Like Mildred's aunt, she was a widow also, but not being possessed of such a plentiful store of this world's goods, was compelled to lead the humble, unpretentious life of a modiste. She had one daughter who had recently embarked in the occupation of making "pot hooks and hangers," and of whom she thought she had just reason to be proud. "She started in on six dollars," she explained to Mildred, "and never had a day's learning in her life above the eighth grade, and now draws ten.

Ah! but she makes a fine appearance, too, especially in her last hat—a Napoleon with two large plumes hanging over the back, looped a bit up from the front with a silver buckle. An' she's proud; the corner is full of last year's shirt-waists—all old-fashioned," she says.

"Does she carry her lunch?" said Mildred's little cousin, who had been drinking in the conversation with open mouth.

"Carry her lunch!" said the stout lady, straightening herself up. "Indeed, no. How could she among all those gentlemen. Oh! but if you could see the presents she gets—flowers and chocolates to no end. Indeed, and she could get one of the managers, too—easy; but 'tis herself that would not look at him. He is a widower; rich, though; two large fountains in his front yard and himself in the old country two months every year."

Mildred was beginning to think that her friend who was so zealous in her praises of the stenographic profession might be instrumental in helping her to get a place in Chicago should she fail in Grand Rapids, and she was about to give this thought expression, when she was asked rather abruptly what she was going to do if she did not find work in Grand Rapids. Can it be possible, Mildred, that your stout friend is a mind reader?

Mildred was not discouraged, however, for she had another friend in the city—a distant relative of her father's, who was a "come-day-go-day" sort of a fellow, who took the greatest delight in helping his friends out of "a bad mess," as he put it. "We will make friends," he told her—"that's the only way to get a job," and immediately extended her an invitation to his home, where his quiet little German wife and baby daughter were glad to receive her.

The October days were warm and the sun shone brilliantly over her head when Mildred started out with her uncle on a labor-seeking expedition. He seemed to have ideas of his own about getting work, one of which he put into effect by stopping before the huge stone building in which are kept the records of the county. He brought Mildred into the building, and seated her on a bench in one of the corridors where men stood discussing an important coming trial. He had some business to transact and he bade her wait for him in the meantime.

Mildred did not remain here long, however, before he returned with a lawyer whom he introduced to her as "Mr. G.——," the attorney whom he met the year before when he was on the jury. The man's hair was streaked with gray and he wore the inevitable blue suit. He informed Mil-

dred pleasantly that he wanted a stenographer, and told her to call in at 2.00 P. M. Mildred's relative was more than proud to think of her getting into a place so quickly, and he was with her again when she went to take the test at 2.00 P. M. The lawyer was not at the office that afternoon at the appointed time, and the associate attorney informed them when they asked for Mr. G—— that he was not in, but that he did not know what he wanted of a stenographer, inasmuch as he, himself, did all the typewriting. This made Mildred feel a little fearful, and she so expressed her thoughts to her relative, but he only answered in tones which could not be heard in the adjoining room: "Don't you let that fellow's 'Boston talk' make a 'fiz' on you."

It was not more than five minutes, however, before the blue-coated, blue-vested, blue-trousered individual with the gray-streaked hair appeared. "I have so many clients waiting for me now," he remarked, "that I cannot make the test. Come again to-morrow morning at 9 o'clock." Mildred was there the next morning to take the test, which the old gentleman pronounced as "fine." The only thing she thought strange about the deal was that he did not mention remuneration. She thought, though, that perhaps it was an oversight—his being such a busy man would account

for his not being able to think of the stenographer's pay.

But only a few days passed before Mildred learned that her employer was what was properly called "a dead beat." He hired stenographers who wished to work "for the practice," and if they remained with him longer than a week he quite frequently gave them a dollar. He was always able to find some student from the business college who was willing to work a few days for nothing, and in this way he always kept himself supplied with help. Mildred's job, which seemed to her so glorious at first, would not "hold water." How glad she was she had not written a letter to her mother about it—a letter which would have brought only disappointment.

She had been with her aunt now two months, and felt heartbroken that she must return home. Her Aunt Mary sympathized with her, but told her it was her earnest belief that it would do her no good to look further. Yet, Mildred could not think that she had made a failure.

CHAPTER XII.

GOING TO "WINDY CITY."

Mildred was back in the old homestead sitting beside the kitchen fire, and Uncle Joe was saying: "Don't you worry, Mildred, Liz was telling me the other day that she thought of going to Chicago to see if she could not find something to do. She's hankerin' for city life, and thinks she can get a situation there. An' it's true there's a goodly lot of cler'cal places in that town if a body only knew how to get them."

The "Liz" referred to was a niece of Uncle Joe's wife, an orphan girl, whose early life had been under the direction of an eccentric maiden aunt. Because of poor health for the last two years she had been compelled to live wherever she could find a relative who could utilize her services. From childhood she had loved music and when her aunt proposed sending her through an academy, she begged that she might take a musical course in a conservatory; but her aunt said she did not believe in a musical education, and insisted that if Lizzie studied her other academic subjects well she would be fitted to attend

the Normal School or a Woman's College, where she would be prepared to follow the profession of teaching, which would be an honor to all belonging to her. Nevertheless, Liz pleaded still, saying that as she grew older, the harder it would be for her to learn music. The stern woman only remonstrated, however. "There is the old organ at home," she said; "the girl may practice on that in vacation, as I'll not have a piano in the house, anyway." Liz only sighed. She would lose the artistic touch she knew, which would make her a Rubenstein or a Liszt. How many nights she dreamed of playing a Sonata of Beethoven's, or Schubert-Taussing's Military March, but alas! she always played them wrong. Very often she would take the money which was sent her for necessities, and buy with it Histories of Music—if she could not have the practice she would have the theory.

During the four years she attended the academy she showed a deeply religious nature, and spent the hours set apart for diversion in deep, meditative thought. Many nights she sat by her window looking out upon the green lawns and well-tended flower-beds which surrounded the school buildings, but it was not to marvel at their beauty, for since they could not give Liz music they had for her lost their charm.

In the same month in which Lizzie graduated her aunt died, and when the orphan girl came to hear the last will and testament of this cold-hearted woman read, the young lawyer looked sympathizingly toward her before he summoned up enough courage to read the cold lines: "To Jane Simpson, my dearest and most beloved friend on earth, I leave my entire estate."

So this had been the outcome. Lizzie's aunt had deceived her, persuading her to attend a boarding school, thereby unfitting her to work at a trade by which she could earn a livelihood; there was no prospect of going through a Woman's College or Normal School now—nothing to do but face the world's cold realities, and if it had not been for her frail strength she would not have minded it so much.

Mildred hurried to see Lizzie the night Uncle Joe told her she thought of going to Chicago, and after some discussion it was decided that Lizzie would go first, but who to go to upon arrival was to them a problem. Lizzie had no friends in the city, but after some deliberation thought of the Y. W. C. A., on Michigan avenue. This she knew to be a respectable rooming and boarding place for young women, and the rates were reasonable.

"I wish our clothes were better to go to a

place like Chicago," remarked Lizzie, "but we will manage in the best way we can. I will go a week before you do," she continued, "and while I am at the Christian Association I will look up a room, for they have the names of numbers of parties who have accommodations to offer—some of them at quite reasonable rates."

On the twentieth of May she left. Mildred had remained with her all day, and now that Lizzie was bidding her good-bye, she assured her that all would be well. Two days later Mildred received a letter from her, in which she stated that she arrived safely, and upon visiting one of the shorthand schools was told there was a big field for women in stenography.

Mildred's delight was unbounded at the thought of obtaining employment in Chicago. Once there everything would go right!

"My child," said her mother that afternoon, as they sat discussing Mildred's future undertaking, "you do not know how it hurts me to have you leave; not that I am fearful of your going out into the world, for I know that during these eighteen years of your life you have had a Christian training which has prepared you to meet bravely the trifling difficulties which may come in your way; but it is because I cannot have you where you should be—in school. You do not know with

what a light heart I would help you to prepare your wardrobe to-night for Vassar, as I did my own so many years ago—that, my child, would give your mother joy. To see you thrown out, though, upon the tempestuous world that will not be considerate enough to even question why you are in it battling for bread, but perhaps will not be willing to admit that you are capable of earning a livelihood, this to me is sorrow deep. In college, my child, you would be understood. Understood by men and women who never act except with deliberation. They would overlook your frailties in the hope that with womanhood you would lose them; but in the business world these defects which are always prone to childhood years would be magnified, and whether you will be able to overcome it all as a few noble people before you have done, your mother can only trust and pray."

Mildred left her mother's side at twilight, and as she walked slowly down the lane she wondered how she could have thought her mother did not realize what was before her; she wondered how she could have been so foolish as to think a woman who had had four years of college discipline did not know how the world looked on one without it. Mildred knew now that her mother had kept from her the worst, in the fear that it would blast her childish young ambitions.

She sat down to-night under the spreading elm tree near the old spring, and leaned her head upon her arm in the light of one long, still lengthening moonbeam, while she listened to the bobolink's notes, which grew weaker and weaker at each utterance. She wondered if she would ever be underneath this tree's protecting shade again, and if all the fancies which she had so sweetly dreamed of here in days since past would be realities; and if when she came back for a few short days each year the rural people would say: "How she has changed."

But, Mildred, it is drawing near the time when you must act. The fond, alluring dreams of city life are terminating in a peaceful twilight on the farm. The whip-poor-will's plaintive notes disturb the silence. One long, long look at the green landscape stretching out beyond—and then Mildred turned to go—for how long, she could not answer. That night, in the land of dreams, she built Fame Castles in a distant city, while she awaited the coming of another morrow.

At the railway station the next morning the train drew a great breath before the door, and Uncle Joe gave Mildred a kiss and his blessing. From this part of Michigan to Chicago it is less than an eight-hour ride, and as it was now three o'clock in the afternoon, Chicago's suburbs were

in sight. Through the window Mildred could see stenographers working in railroad freight offices and large manufacturing plants, and when she saw with what ease and rapidity these suburban artisans were performing their work, she wondered what they were doing farther up—in the metropolis, the mighty concentration of labor and wealth in whose depths she knew she would soon be blindly groping her way.

When Mildred alighted from the car she tried to walk as "cityfied" as she could in her skimped linen shirt-waist and cheap black skirt. The first thing she saw was her hands, which were pitifully red-looking, and she wore no gloves. To add to her uncomely appearance her shoulders were slightly humped; but Lizzie led her into the great waiting-room, where she told her the real situation. She explained that she had rented a room in a flat building on the north side of the city at eight dollars per month, as this was the cheapest she could find. She told Mildred that she could go to see an Employment Agency that afternoon, if she wished, and took from her pocketbook a clipping from the morning's Tribune on which was the address of one; but Mildred was tired and preferred to wait and make the trial the next day. They then boarded a Northwestern Elevated train. It was Mildred's first glimpse of the "Prairie City."

CHAPTER XIII.

A STENOGRAPHIC BUREAU.

Mildred was in Lizzie's room, and while lunch was being prepared they talked of their prospects for obtaining employment. The room which Lizzie had taken was in a four-story flat building, and when Mildred looked about her and realized for the first time what it was not to have access "to a whole house," she spoke of its being tucked up and could not see why the children playing contentedly in the alley down below did not die of consumption in a day; but Lizzie explained that she would get used to it all after a short time. Mildred was perfectly familiar with the style of housekeeping for which she and Lizzie had equipped themselves, which was known as "boarding yourself." She did not look upon it with such apprehension as do city people who term it "light housekeeping," for she had known the girls at home to do it when attending the Normal School for eight months in the year and, therefore, was not fearful of the undertaking.

"You remember that school on Washington street which I spoke to you about in my letter,"

said Lizzie, when they sat down to the table. "Now, he has a stenographic bureau connected with it, run by his wife. She takes in foreign students, or advanced students from anywhere, and lets them work with her; then they place them in positions and do not have to pay unless you get the place. You can see," she continued, laughing, "it is nothing more or less than a post-graduate course in shorthand. He has quite a cheap course in bookkeeping, too, but I think I will wait and see how you get on before I attempt to do that. He says there is more prejudice against women bookkeepers in Chicago than there is in the East, and I would be a little afraid to risk much money until I would be sure of getting something."

The next morning Mildred left with Lizzie to make her first real business trip in Chicago. They boarded the Northwestern Elevated at Sedgwick street and North avenue, and as Lizzie had forgotten the nearest station at which to get off it was not until the train had become cleared of people, and they found the guards looking very strangely at them, that they concluded they had better get off at Madison street and Fifth avenue, and with the aid of a map of the city and the directions of a policeman, reached the shorthand school, which was on the twelfth floor of

one of the many office buildings on Washington street.

When they got off the elevator they were met by a number of boys and girls, whose ages ranged from fifteen to eighteen; all were carrying red-lined note-books, an assortment of pencils, a spelling-book and a small green manual on Pitman Phonography. Mildred and Lizzie followed them down the hall, and entered a room which was marked over the door: "Stenographic Bureau." The wife of the principal of the school conducted this, and she referred them to the next room, where her husband was registering students. Mildred told him of the work she had had; of the system of shorthand which she wrote; of what she thought she was able to do, and then the contract was drawn up in which was specified: "You do not have to pay tuition unless you get a position."

The work of this stenographic bureau was furnished mainly by the occupants of the large building in which it was located. Lawyers, physicians, architects, real estate men, and all those who had no regular stenographer brought their work there, and the student was set at accomplishing the task. Mildred was somewhat discouraged at first, and did not do very good work. She imagined that everybody else could run a machine

faster than she could, and was sure they could write shorthand faster, even though it was on practiced matter.

The second day after her arrival another foreign student put in his appearance, and was assigned to a desk immediately behind Mildred. When the noon hour came Mildred was indisposed to leave the room, inasmuch as she had heard of no position, which fact had tended to make her downhearted. Leaving her own desk, she went to the window, and upon returning to it, found the newly-initiated student in quite as disappointed an attitude as she was herself.

"Do you not eat lunch?" he asked.

"Sometimes," replied Mildred, "but I do not care much about doing it to-day. I am quite out of patience with this place. How did you ever come to find the school out?"

"Oh, I came here from New Orleans; saw their 'ad.' in the Tribune, and thought it would be a pretty good place to stay until I got an insight into how things were running. I've had a year's experience, so their work is not doing me any good."

"I've had only a few weeks," said Mildred, "but have taken advantage of the situation to raise it to a year."

"Well, there is no wrong in doing that, as I

intend to magnify mine to two or three years. I want to study law, and if I could get into a law office would be much better satisfied. I think there is a big chance here in Chicago to do Court reporting, and that makes the road to law easy."

"Why could I not do the same thing? I want to go on to school more, but will have to do as much studying as I can while I work."

"I do not know any reason why you could not be a lawyer, for I know several women in New Orleans who are. They are married to lawyers, but I do not know any reason why a woman could not practice alone if she had push. I intend to investigate matters, however, and any information that I can get I will give to you. If I do not get anything out of this place this week I am going to quit; but you have not told me your name."

"Mildred McElroy."

"You are Scotch. My name is Charles Fontebrau, and you can guess I'm French. I am a descendant of the Arcadian people, and can trace my lineage back to the beautiful Evangeline." This boy had a frank way which much attracted Mildred, and his enthusiasm lightened her load considerably. She was glad to tell Lizzie to-night of her new friend, for she was sure he would be able to work some way out of the "scrape" into

which she had gotten. Mildred remained until Saturday of that week, and in the meantime Charles Fontebrau told her of his plans to leave and go to the Remington typewriter office, where stenographers went, he said, and bid on jobs just as men do on goods at an auction. Mildred had never heard of this place before, but she concurred with Charles Fontebrau in the opinion that they would get a place far sooner from there than from the Stenographic Bureau.

But Mildred had not yet given an Employment Agency a trial, and had they not promised to give her a "square deal?"

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY.

Mildred went out on North avenue before going down town the next morning, and bought a Tribune. Turning to the employment column she read one of those long "ads," so full of promise; so enticing to the stranger:

PERMANENT POSITIONS SECURED FOR LADIES—CALL.

Stenographers $15
Bookkeepers $15
Cashiers .....$ 9
Demonstrators $18
Typewriters .....$ 8
Addressers .....$ 7

GUARANTEE AGENCY. DEARBORN ST. ROOM —.

Long before Mildred came to Chicago she had put a good deal of trust in these so-called "harbingers of hope." She had even written a letter to one of them and received a satisfactory answer to the effect that if she was able to fill a $40 job, "Come on." The only request that was made

was a $1 bill and that, to be sure, was freely sent.

But she was right in the building now where it was located, and had the name and number, No. 930 M——'s Mercantile Agency. She asked the elevator man to make sure that she was in the right building, and she could not see why the other individuals in the elevator cage should look at her so wistfully. She was unable to comprehend why they should pity her for being right at the door of one of the greatest "position getters" in Chicago.

The ninth floor—over the door in large letters was written the name of the Agency. Mildred opened the door upon an uncarpeted room, devoid of furniture, except for a few chairs ranged about it for the comfort of the applicants. At the further end was the clerk's desk, and Mildred moved nearer and asked her for an application blank. Near by the table at which the woman sat was a small one containing a large heap of these blanks, and to this one she directed Mildred. "What a large number of positions they must fill," thought Mildred, as she proceeded to answer all the questions on the paper very carefully; but unfortunately she spoiled her work, which necessitated her going back to the woman for a new blank. "Oh! just let it go as it is," said the clerk,

"so long as it is readable, that is all we care about," and Mildred little thought that the application she was troubling herself about would never be looked at.

This young woman was one of the most successful promoters of employment agency fakes, although Mildred did not know this—neither could she be expected to. A look was imprinted on her face which might be called "discriminating"—discriminating in what it would be hard to say. Her mop of tow-colored hair was neatly combed back from a brow of medium height; her eyes were a trifle magnetic, and a sort of diabolical smile played over her hard, matured features. Her gray skirt fitted her smartly, and her dimity waist, with its band of white at her throat, made her look business-like, and yet did not destroy her femininity. She was busily employed giving out positions to all classes of girls. Many were chided by her because they did not learn to run the kind of machine which the position she had in hand called for. Stock-yard places, no one wanted to fill, for when a supposed call from Swift or Armour came up, some one of the best applicants always lived on the North Side, "and mamma could not endure to have me so far away from home—away over there among the cattle pens out of civilization!" The Employment

Agency's clerk told younger applicants gently that they would have to remove their short skirts if they expected to do justice to whom she had which she sent them. Those to whom she had dropped cards on the day previous with no notation save "Please call," hurried breathlessly to her desk, but with a calmness in her eye which bespoke firmness, she said: "Girlie, you are too late."

Behind her desk, and to the east side, was a larger desk occupied by a gray-haired individual, who was the proprietor and manager. He did not interfere with any of the applicants, but was very busy attending to the answering of the little instrument within the telephone booth near him. Frequently, too, his answers were in the form of extended conversations.

At last Mildred handed in her application blank and the clerk said "correct," with her genuine firmness. Clearing her throat, she continued: "Now, listen; I have a nice position here for you, paying $40.00 per month. Now, dearie, be sure and get it—don't fail us!" Quietly she wrote out the mysterious paper, put it in an addressed envelope and sealed it.

To a sooty building given over to chemical and mechanical concerns—this is where Mildred's envelope led her. She climbed the long stairs in

the dirt-pervaded building, whose atmosphere hardly allowed her to breathe, and asked an office boy if she was on the right floor. "You will find the manager in the room down the hall" answered the boy, and when Mildred entered the room she was confronted by a man with a dark, swarthy face, and whose hair was slickly parted back from a low brow. He talked very low, and when he spoke to Mildred after reading the paper inside the envelope, he said: "Go back to the Agency early to-morrow morning, and if I decide to take you I will notify them." He made no further remarks, and then bowed her out of the room.

When Mildred reached home she, of course, related to Lizzie every detail. On the following morning Lizzie advised her not to return to the Agency, but to the firm, and tell them she did not want the place. The manager appeared to be surprised the next morning when Mildred told him she did not think it would be best to accept the promising job. In a moment, however, he drew a long sigh, after which he said: "Well, I'm just as glad you did not take it. The Agency has great trouble in supplying us with the right kind of operators; we have had several of them here on trial, and none could do the work satisfactorily, and I'm afraid you'd be just the same. Our last girl had done work in science in the

Chicago University under professors, and she even was 'floored' by the chemical terms."

Now the Employment Agency did not charge a registration fee, but simply asked to be given the first week's salary, and how they could make any money when they lived up to such a contract as this had always been a problem to Mildred; but she saw now that if she had taken the place to which she had assigned her, she would have filled it one week, and out of this salary the Agency would have received $5.00, allowing the firm who co-operated with them the remainder. This, indeed, would be a good profit, providing they sent a new stenographer every week, instead of whenever a vacancy happened, as they had insinuated.

Mildred did not find Chicago jobs such easy "getting." It took harder pulling than a tip to an Employment Agency.

CHAPTER XV.

A TYPEWRITER EMPLOYMENT OFFICE.

WE CAN SEND YOU STENOGRAPHER,
BRIGHT STUDENT
OR EXPERIENCED.
R——— TYPEWRITER COMPANY.

Mildred's failure to reap beneficial results from the Employment Agency did not discourage her in the least, and she now resolved to try and get a position from one of the largest typewriter employment agencies in Chicago.

To the reader who has never been in any one of our large cities, particularly Chicago or New York, the description of a typewriter employment office will be of little interest; but he who has lived, or now lives, in any metropolitan city, will, indeed, be appreciative; for the typewriter exchange is sure to have been a factor in the life of every young man or woman who has entered the stenographic arena. When the course in the business college has been finished, they turn their eyes longingly toward the humble corner set apart for them in the great office and spend perhaps months

in the hope of obtaining a situation through its aid.

In the further end of the building in which the machine company I mention was located, was "The Employment Department," at the upper end of which was a door which opened into the manager's office, but the stenographers were not allowed to enter by this door. The placard at the top forbade it: "Stenographers must enter by the other door." The small office was encircled by a row of benches, and here the stenographers sat while they waited for "calls." A large bulletin hung over the manager's desk, which read: "Calls will be read at 9.00 A. M.; 11.00 A. M.; 12.00 A. M.; 2.00 P. M., and 3.00 P. M. Beginners' applications taken."

For the manager of a department his desk was very bare, there being nothing on it except a few blanks, two or three pens and pencils and a few sheets of the company's paper. The telephone hung conveniently near him, through which medium he received notifications of positions for applicants. He chewed gum vigorously in order that he might relieve the strain under which he was laboring, and perhaps check the annoyance which he felt at seeing the long, woe-begone faces of the many girls out of employment.

The class of individuals with whom he dealt

was, indeed, varied. There were stenographers who came here who had had years of experience —so long that they had become ashamed of the fact; then there were some whose experience had not been enough to substantiate what they were capable of doing, and they were constantly trying to make their few months appear like an object under a microscope; and, lastly, the beginner, who is always ready to offer her services for little or nothing, "just to get a start."

Some of the young women come gaily dressed, with hats adorned with plumes or gardens of flowers, and skirts with long trains; but the stenographers did this, believing, as they told their co-laborers who did not sanction it, "They look a lot at dress and appearance." It would appear, though, that all these applicants possessed a goodly amount of patience, for they would take the slip which the Employment manager would give them and would walk away down the long aisle with all the meekness of a Sister of Mercy.

Sometimes the girls described their experiences while they sat waiting for the "calls" to come off, and it would be at these times that one could catch a bit occasionally of their most edifying conversations. The older and more reserved ones would not talk much, preferring to preserve quiet until they should get back at "the old stand"

again. The younger ones, however, were more sociable, and kept up among themselves a continuous chatter.

"How much experience have you had?" one would say to another.

"Oh, I've had two years."

"Well, you ought to be able to get a pretty good job."

"Oh, I don't know; sometimes it's not easy. One manager refused me the other day on the grounds that my recommendations were not sufficient."

"Well, you certainly had a lot of push that you couldn't get up and tell him to give an account of himself; those recommendations are only a bogus to see how much 'pull' you got. I know a man who'll give a recommendation to anyone; he will put his name to any document in the shape of praising you up."

"Yes," broke in another stenographer of seven or eight years' experience, five of which had been in one of Booth's packing houses, "that's just it; I know six men who'll do that same thing."

"But some of the managers are terribly unreasonable," said a third girl. "The typewriter people sent me to one place the other day, and the manager gave me a test, and when I got through he told me I worked as if I had lock-jaw; this

was too much for me, and I just up and slapped him."

"Well, I never make a show of myself like that; besides, it does not do any good. But what are those girls doing? They are pushing up; if we don't get to the front we'll lose our chance."

There was a flurry for a few moments, while the young women got in line before the manager's railing, and then order was called for the 9.00 A. M. "call."

The Employment manager is speaking: "Now, can't we get a young lady who will go to the 'Yards?' A fifteen dollar job at the stock-yards—anybody want it?"

"Well, I just won't go to the stock-yards," said one applicant, rather advanced in years. "The smell is so strong no one can stay, and they work you to death. If you want it," she remarked to a diminutive young woman beside her, "chase up there; now's your chance."

"An eighteen dollar job in a law office; one of the best law offices on Washington street. Good opportunity to do court reporting. Who wants this?"

"Oh! those lawyers," commented the stout lady again. "Can't never get your pay out o' them. Most skinching class in town—and as for doing court work, 'hum,' there ain't a lawyer or a

judge in the city of Chicago who will give a woman the taking of testimony in a dog post-mortem; too busy keeping their sons-in-law—no, that's not for me; but, here," she exclaimed, reaching back a little for a lame boy on crutches, "you've had law work; push up there!"

"Mr. H., Mr. H.", cried the stout lady vociferously, "is it law work?"

No answer.

After shouting for the third and last time: "Mr. H., is it law work?" the manager answered in a high-pitched voice: "Board of Trade."

Miss M—— then being satisfied that she would not be tormented by the lawyers, extended her broad palm and in stentorian tones which chilled all other aspirants about her, announced that she would take it, adding, in a firm voice: "I've had 11 years and 8 months' experience;" and, inasmuch as thirty minutes later sounds of her voice came through the telephone, as she poured into the ears of the Employment Manager details of the victory she had gained by getting some firm by the neck, and choking them into employing a stenographer, her sister stenographers knew she would not be in the Employment Office for some time to come.

Since Mildred had been frequenting this place she had met again that interesting boy, whose

L of C.

society she enjoyed so much during her short stay in the stenographic bureau. "He was hanging out," as he termed it, looking for something which would suit him; "for boys," he told her, "put up the 'bluff' that they were more independent, and would not work for such low wages as girls. After a few trials he got the offer of a place in a railroad office at $10 per week, and told Mildred not to take less than this either as a parting warning. She did not feel capable, though, to earn as much yet, and, therefore, took an eight dollar position in a real estate office on La Salle street.

CHAPTER XVI.

DISCHARGED.

G. W.—— & Co., second floor, R.—— Bldg. Mildred was at the door of a large real estate firm, and was met by a fat man vigorously endeavoring to set the air in motion with a palm fan. He looked a moment at the paper which she handed him, and then said: "How much experience have you had?"

"One year in law."

"Well, if you've had law work you can do this work easily enough; it is nothing but plain correspondence. This is only a temporary position," he added. "Our stenographer is in the East; there is just a possibility of its being permanent. Have you had lunch?"

Mildred replied—"Yes," although she had had none, and had no intention of getting any.

"Come back, say, in half an hour, and I'll put you on a machine; if you pass the Remington, you might step in and tell them you are going to work here this afternoon, so they'll not be sending us anyone else."

Mildred returned to the Typewriter office, and

when the Employment Manager saw her in the door he sung out: "Did you get that job, Miss McElroy? Well, you want to keep it, for they are the best firm in Chicago of their kind."

1.00 o'clock, and Mildred was ready for business; the same old bluffy fat man received her, and motioned her to follow him down the aisle.

"Are you used to taking dictation from different people?" he asked, as he stopped before a No. 6 Remington. "There are five or six parties here who will dictate to you, but you will get accustomed to that after awhile, as the boys are very congenial."

Mildred sat down to her desk, and presently a lease was dictated. Her slight knowledge of law forms enabled her to do it well, yet she was nervous. A few letters were given her during the afternoon, which she took down with great precision and thought she got them right, at least, she tried to; but her experience had been shallow. She lacked those little attainments which go to make up a good stenographer. She took dictation rapidly enough; her notes were well formed, but she misunderstood. She was not accustomed to the phraseology of a metropolitan city. It was the first large office she had ever work in, yet—she must succeed.

When Mildred handed in her letters that after-

noon the young man to whom she gave them found she had mixed up one or two, but only said: "Never mind, leave them in your desk and we will fix them up to-morrow. I have not hardly the time to-night." He looked at her quizzically, and Mildred could not see why there was a look of pity on his face, unless it was because she was so determined, working alone in the great city in her shabby clothes.

She looked across the way at the expanse of elegantly furnished La Salle offices, and could not help but be thankful for her good fortune. She wrote home and told her mother of her success. She even told her more than it was; she exaggerated, so desirous was she of soothing the anxious woman's troubled heart. And then there was dear Lizzie waiting at home. Mildred could not wait for her to open the door that night, and rushing into the room, exclaimed: "I've got a place in one of the largest real estate offices in Chicago."

When Saturday morning came Mildred hoped that the girl who left her place vacant would not return. The office boy had told her Friday he did not think she would have to leave—and what a stroke of luck this had been! The last thing she told Lizzie on leaving was that she would have her eight dollars. She went away in remarkably good spirits.

It was now 12.30 o'clock, and the cashier came to Mildred's desk and said: "Miss McElroy," and laid down an envelope containing eight dollars. But Mildred had not been given much work during the morning, and something seemed to tell her that matters did not go right. The manager, who apparently had so much sympathy for her, had gone away earlier than usual, and she wondered at this; another aggressive one who had habitually dictated letters to her, had gone to another stenographer's desk with his mail; another one asked her to write out an "ad" for the Tribune, and to be sure to get it straight on the lined paper; and, of course, she did not get it right. He laughed, although he tried not to let her see him in the act, and merely took it, remarking: "It will do." Her face burned. She was agitated. She knew it was her last day in the great real estate firm on La Salle street.

Then the fat director who met her the first day came slowly to her desk, every rib in his body shaking. He stopped abruptly only for a moment while he said: "I guess we'll not need you any more, Miss McElroy."

Mildred's face paled. "Why, is the other stenographer coming back?" she ventured to query.

"Yes, I guess she is," he replied, and to avoid further comment left her.

Still Mildred could not think she was really discharged. She thought if they would say her work here for a week had been satisfactory it would help her. She would go to the corpulent director and ask him.

"Well," was the curt answer, "the boys tell me that you're not accurate. You see, it makes a great deal of difference when a man gives you a letter and says 'Milwaukee avenue,' and you put it down 'Michigan.' Of course," he continued, "I could say you worked here for a week, but would decline to comment on the quality of work done in that week."

"They have telephoned for another stenographer," thought Mildred, "and the Remington people will now know I've been discharged." She did not know how she got away, but found herself climbing the stairs of the Northwestern Elevated at the Quincy street station.

It was Saturday afternoon—the half-holiday. Gaily dressed girls carrying bunches of flowers stood on the platform; men and boys in duck suits and spotless linen. To Mildred no one seemed troubled. She alone bore the burden of the day. She laid her head back on the seat in despair, and then she remembered that letter which she had written to her mother in the morning. She had forgotten to bring it with her, and they would

read it, she knew, after she was gone and laugh over her presumption and self-conceit:

"Dear Mother:

"I am getting along nicely. Have been so fortunate as to get into this place. I will have a good opportunity to work up my shorthand here, for I can study nights and take lectures and sermons, and after a couple of years will stand a pretty good chance of getting into the courts. I cannot help but be thankful. They have not complained of my work so far, and I do not think they will. I do not have many letters to write. Business is over this afternoon at one o'clock, and I have earned my eight dollars. Will write you again Monday. Mildred."

But you need not worry, Mildred, they have never read it, for the manager who sympathized so much with you saw you write it, and has put it away where no one will ever read the earnest, simple words, wishing it were in his power to substantiate your childish perseverance and earnest faith.

And now Mildred's heart beat faster as she thought of Lizzie waiting so anxiously at home for her. When she opened the door, a smile was on her face, and she had a little lunch waiting. She had bought a few luxuries because she thought Mildred would get her week's pay today.

Mildred could not bear her trouble alone. Her young heart yearned for sympathy and she threw herself at Lizzie's feet, and wringing her hands with all the anguish of her heart, said: "I have been discharged." Lizzie felt it, and tried in vain to soothe her, but she was heartbroken.

"Do not do it, dear," she said, "it hurts me to see you look so—your face is so white and worn. Why do you act so, child? We must do the best we can."

But Mildred only answered: "I am weary looking for better things; I thought it was all over."

"My child," said Lizzie, "you would not want to go back home. Think of your mother; you will work for her sake. There are times in all our lives when we feel like giving up—it is a test of our better self when we have the resistance not to yield."

Something just then fell with an undulating cadence upon Mildred's troubled ear. It was the chime of the evening church-bells ringing out their matin to announce a service in the Episcopal Church. Turning to Lizzie, she said: "It will relieve me to go."

"Let not your heart be troubled: Ye believe in God, believe also in me. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you."

Mildred knew then her heart was troubled

when it should not be. She thought herself comfortless when she was not. The white-robed choir, too, was singing: "What a friend we have in Jesus."

A renewed hope burned in her heart, and going back to Lizzie, she threw herself at her feet and said: "I will begin again; I will be strong and determined."

And what has made you do it, Mildred? Was it that short hour of prayer? In your future life there will be battles of distress deeper than this one—your first on the threshold of the beginning of your life. You will need His comfort. May you always ask it! No other friend can console you so well.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIRST SUCCESS.

The Remington Typewriter, Mildred knew, was not the only machine in Chicago, but her only objection to leaving it was that she was not as proficient on others as she was on this one. After some investigation, however, she found another typewriter exchange on Monroe street, whose machine was the "Underwood." In these machine companies applicants are allowed to practice on typewriters if they wish for some time every day, and Mildred, therefore, took advantage of this opportunity and worked earnestly for a week or two. The Underwood Typewriter had some first-class positions and after some time, when Mildred asked as to whether there had been any calls, the boy answered that he had one which he could let her have—a half-day job paying $5 per week in a law office in the Rookery Building. Mildred was very glad to get this, as she knew it would give her a chance to secure something permanent during the time she was working there. The place would be open a month and she reasoned that this would be quite a long while in the way of looking up a position.

She took the elevator in one of those buildings which is devoted to the aristocracy of the law, real estate, insurance, etc. The office was on the third floor at the end of the hall, and as she walked toward it she felt a thrill of pride in her first step on mosaic. Her card read: "No. 354," which brought her before the entrance of a handsomely furnished suite of offices.

In the large room in front there was the telephone booth, many cases of law books, the stenographer's desk, letter files, letter press, etc. Mildred handed her card to a young woman with bushy blonde hair, who bowed her into a chair superciliously. "Yes, they want a stenographer while I am on my vacation," she said; "I get a month, and need it, too, for I am worked to death. Mr. C.—— attends to the hiring, and if you will just be seated a few moments he will be in directly."

Presently a young attorney appeared in the door, and after giving a courteous nod to the stenographer, went straightway to his private office. He was typical of the young, well educated society-seeking Chicago lawyer. His features were clear cut, his forehead broad and high, and he carried his head with a dignified poise. He wore a blue suit of the most costly material, which, with its box coat and baggy trousers, was most

becoming. In his hand he carried a straw hat and a black silk umbrella whose folds adhered so closely to the handle that one might think its diameter no more than that of a pin. The stenographer took Mildred's note to him, and then beckoned her into his office.

The attorney looked at her pleasantly and said: "Miss McElroy." He asked her something as to her work and experience; told her the work would be mainly correspondence, as court was not in session. "It will not take more than the forenoon in which to do it," he added; "come down at half-past eight to-morrow morning," and this was the last Mildred saw of the blonde girl, mosaic floors and huge piles of law books until the morrow. How anxious she was to reach home in order that Lizzie might know of her good success.

Mildred went promptly to her work the next day, and when she arrived was met by another attorney, who kindly opened her desk for her and bade her get accustomed to her new surroundings. Outside of a few letters, at writing which she could take her time, and a few legal forms of a similar nature, this was all she had to do, and was readily convinced that she would be able to fill the place for this short time satisfactorily.

But Lizzie had not yet found work, although

she had exhausted every effort to find employment. She watched the papers and answered advertisements until she was heartsick. Tuition was so high in the business college that she could hardly afford to attend it to do any work in bookkeeping. Mildred would gladly have given her the money, but the little she earned hardly sufficed to keep them; yet Lizzie had hopes.

One night, however, when Mildred returned from work she saw Lizzie sitting by the window reading a letter, and from the earnest way in which she looked at it Mildred knew it must be of some importance. Lizzie hesitated before she told her she was going to marry the attorney who sympathized with her so much when he read the last document to which her aunt ever signed her name. She did not tell Mildred just how this courtship happened, but Mildred had read these lines at the end of the letter: "You can indulge in music now to your heart's content."

Before Lizzie left she arranged for Mildred to leave the tenement flat in which they had been staying since their arrival in Chicago, and secured a more comfortable home for her in the suburbs with people whom she knew would be interested in her. Still, she was worried as to Mildred's future, and wondered much as to whether she thought she would be able to get another po-

sition; but Mildred relieved her mind by assuring her she knew she would have no difficulty in doing so. But the question uppermost in the struggling, ambitious girl's mind was, "Will I?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN A LAW OFFICE.

When the crooked marks can be written upon paper with a fair degree of swiftness and the first office position secured, the ambitious individual begins to think about preparing himself for the next important step—Court Reporting. Usually his first work is in a law office. These offices do not pay as well as mercantile ones, as a rule, but the aspirant does not care for this, so long as it brings him nearer to the coveted goal. When working for attorneys he will become familiar with law terms, the filing of papers, serving (legal) papers, etc., and if he be fortunate enough to be with unprejudiced employers, he will get an opportunity once in a while to frequent the halls of justice and "take at" testimony.

It is not strange, then, to know that Mildred was directing her efforts toward this line of work. Many told her that her speed might never reach the height which is necessary in order to catch the words which flow from the mouth of silver-tongued barristers; but she did not give this even credence. There was nothing she

thought but what she could accomplish. She was sure to be at the top, for no one, she firmly believed, ever failed to get there who had the slightest desire to go.

She knew, too, that Court Reporting in the city of Chicago is not controlled as it is at home—appointments made by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Circuit Judge after the applicant has undergone a difficult competitive examination. Here, if the stenographer contemplates taking up Law Reporting, he endeavors to get as many friends in the legal profession as is possible; rents an office in one of the large buildings and has painted on the door: "Court Stenographer." He then waits for lawyers to solicit his services in court, and if he does his work so well that they return a second time it is his own reward.

Before Mildred's four weeks were over she began to look for another place. She went to the Typewriter Exchange every day at noon-time, and when a call from a law office paying $6 per week presented itself, she was immediately seized with the fever to secure it.

She was accepted and was to begin work the next Monday. This she thought fortunate, for her time in the temporary place which she had been filling would expire the following Saturday.

She had filled this vacancy well, and had not had much to worry her; yet, she realized the subordinacy of her position, as does every other stenographer who has ever served her apprenticeship in temporary places, for in what more effective way could the employer show her this than by remarking to callers as he usually does: "Our stenographer is on her vacation."

And this was Saturday afternoon, and Mildred's predecessor had arrived. She announced her coming by simply standing in the door and gazing at the machine; nor did she speak. She only passed down the room, stopping at the different private offices, tapping the carpet with the toe of her shoe or the end of her umbrella as she walked. She spoke with each attorney, telling him how rested she was by being away from "civilization" for a while, and then looking down toward Mildred's desk, remarked: "Are you not glad, Mr. ———, that you've not had to put up with her for more than a month? Oh, no. I'll not hurry myself. Will be down Monday."

These are the parting words of the stenographer whose place Mildred had filled for the last four weeks.

The lawyer for whom she went to work was engaged in the real estate business as well as the law. Mildred had cherished the idea that she

would not have to do very hard work, as the remuneration was not heavy; that her hours would be reasonable, and she would thus be enabled after a year to begin to study law in some one of the law schools having night courses. She thought a law degree would assist her materially were she a Court reporter, by enabling her to do her work in a way which would demonstrate it as superior to others.

Now, Mr. Le Grosse, the attorney by whom Mildred was employed, was French, and unfortunately retained much of the French accent, which made it difficult to understand him. He was a graduate from one of the French universities, and a well learned man in general. Reverses, however, as the old story goes, had left him with little money to grace his position in life. His apparel, as a consequence, was not as elaborate as he would have liked to have it, and the social requirements of his profession necessitated so much expenditure that he had little left to indulge upon it.

Mildred did not know, though, that she was laboring under a wrong impression of her employer. She thought him to be so engrossed in his work that he would think of her only indifferently. She was determined, however, to tell him of her desire to study law. She thought he would

be so interested when he learned that he had such a progressive stenographer.

"But why do you think of studying law?" was his interrogation when Mildred told him her plans. "You are unsophisticated yet and lack those little qualities which the newsboy possesses —that is, in the way of taking care of yourself. It seems to me you are the most uneducated person I have ever met. I do not doubt but that you have some knowledge, yet you do not seem to be able to show it. You should be able to take down accurately what I dictate slowly to you, but I see you do not do well with your stenography at all. Miss V., the public stenographer, who did my work before you came, never wrote such stuff as you do sometimes. My advice is that you endeavor to become a good stenographer and be able to earn some kind of a salary, and do that for the rest of your life, or until you get married anyway; that is enough for a woman. Then, too, it is better than being a saleswoman, a milliner, or something of that sort."

The days wore into weeks, and the weeks into months, and still Mildred seemed always to make mistakes in letters. She could not understand under any circumstances, no matter how hard she would strain her ear. He told Mildred she should ask over when anything did not make

sense; but she was tired of asking over when it did no good. How many nights she went home with her heart aching because there was always something wrong in her letters—again and again something corrected. Ah! and what is there that touches the heart of the stenographer more than to see the ink correction? There is something cruel in that dash of black fluid—there is something in it which makes you wish you had never learned how to make those odd-looking marks. And all because someone did not speak plain, you misunderstood, or some little mark looked just like some other.

Mildred was never given permission to study, but was advised by her attorney to read story books instead of text books. "I see you have on your desk a Brief History of England," he remarked one morning, "and I want to tell you that what you want is an extended history of all nations—read numbers of biographies."

Mildred answered that what she was endeavoring to do was to pass an entrance examination.

"Ah! that's a mistaken idea; you have no need of examinations. Go to the theatres, go to church, make friends; that is what you need to do."

Will matters go on just as they are at present, Mildred, or will the clouds which hang above you now drop still lower?

CHAPTER XIX.

DARKER SHADOWS.

Mildred was still very disappointed with this office position. She took it with the supposition that she would have time to study, and she was getting no time whatever. She did not have Saturday afternoons like other stenographers, and had to work from eight o'clock until seven, and many nights later, although when she was hired her employer stated her hours would be from 8.30 A. M. until 5 P. M.

She could not have much money left either on which to dress when she received only six dollars a week. Nearly all the young women who were employed in the building spent a large percentage of their salaries on their clothes, and so long as Mildred had been with them their attitude had been characterized by naught but unfriendliness, as they believed that one who could not look equal to them in dress was not worthy their companionship. She had spoken now and then to the girl with the fluffy red hair in the office across the hall, for the girl had sometimes borrowed a window stick, a stamp or some trifle, by which

means Mildred had met her. In some way, though, she had learned that Mildred drew a rather diminutive salary, and, meeting her one day going out at the lunch hour, queried why she did not carry her lunch; "for you just simply cannot get anything to eat unless you join the Business Woman's Club or go to The Mrs. Clark Co.," said the young woman, "and those places just soak you for cash." Sometimes, too, Mildred met her on the elevator, but some way she always turned her head to the opposite side. Is it not strange what a short revolution in life these "head turners" have?

Those long autumn nights that Mildred thought to have put on her books were gone She had had to work overtime, and even when she closed her desk at night the cabinet roll did not envelope the worries of the day—she took them home with her; and she could not count the tears she had shed on that old No. 2 Remington.

The fact that Mildred could not do her work in as satisfactory a manner as other stenographers could be easily accounted for—for who does not know what it is to be annoyed by an always complaining employer? Neither was it singular that only yesterday morning she should put a letter in the wrong envelope. Of course, the firm to

whom it went sent it back, and when the attorney opened it he laid it upon Mildred's desk, saying: "That's not just the way to do business; I will keep you until I get another stenographer."

Mildred did not answer, for there was no use in answering. She saw it plainly; she must get another place. But how short a time she had in which to do it. Her lunch hour was so brief that she could not get time to go to the typewriter exchanges. "I will put an ad. in the Law Bulletin," she thought, "and that might bring success." Yet she was doubtful. She bought next Sunday's Tribune. Her eye fell on the want column and she read:

"Wanted—A stenographer in a law office; must have experience; small pay. Address E, Tribune."

On the following Monday morning she was not surprised when the mail carrier brought in a voluminous package of letters, tied by a thick piece of twine. Mr. Le Grosse broke the cord about them, and then quietly cut each one open with his knife. After piling them all in a heap at one side of his desk he remarked: "I put an 'ad' in yesterday's Tribune, and this is the result."

"It is not at all startling news to me," said Mildred; "I believe I read the notice long before you

did on Sunday morning, as I was seeking for a good one to answer myself."

Mildred could not for a moment think of being out of work. She could leave, she knew, and seek another position, but she did not know how long it would take her. She knew the man to be cowardly, and wondered if 'twere in her power to make him think she was more independent if it would not deter him, at least for a time, in his plans of hiring another stenographer. He might then think it would not matter so much whether he discharged her or not. It flashed through her mind that she would pretend to have another place in view, and would use a letter as a medium to let him know of this fact.

It was past the noonday hour when Mildred went to the Noonday Rest to luncheon. Many of the stenographers as they came in passed into the sitting room to lounge upon the easy chairs and couches, while they spent a few minutes reading the new magazines; but Mildred mingled with a long line of girls who immediately sought the dining room. As they ate strains of music from the fingers of a skillful pianist stole out over the tables and helped to lift the morning's petty burdens, which rested on the minds of the young women. Some leaned wearily back in their chairs, and as they pushed from them a hot drink

or a dish of dessert exclaimed: "Oh, dear! I do not think a woman ought to work. Her place is in the home."

When Mildred sat down to the writing desk she wrote on paper stamped "The Noonday Rest:"

October 30, 18—

Mrs. Elizabeth McElroy, Saginaw, Mich.

Dear Aunt—You asked me in your last letter what I thought about coming to Saginaw to work for Cousin Harry. I suppose it would be just the thing for me, because I have had experience in law and know I could fill the place.

I do not like Chicago so well as I thought I would at first. It seems it is not just the kind of a place for one to get a start in; but Cousin Harry's term as Prosecutor would be over in two years, and I could then come back to Chicago, for I do not think there is any other city in which one can climb the ladder of success so fast as here, once you are in the right place.

No doubt I will get a letter from Harry to-morrow. MILDRED.

Mildred addressed an envelope for her letter, and going back to the office, threw it upon the mailing desk, as if she had forgotten to fold it up, and knew he would be sure to read it.

"I guess that sounds as if I was telling the truth," she thought, "and I am quite certain he will never doubt the existence of that imaginary Aunt Elizabeth or Cousin Harry; and if I can make him think so for a week or so anyway, I will be able to secure a new place in that time."

And Mildred never saw the new stenographer. She only asked herself if the future would be somewhat like the past?

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST RECOMMENDATION.

Mildred's last experience had taught her that there was not so much to be gained from working in law offices as she had thought heretofore. In the first place, the pay in the class of law offices in which she would be hired was small, and in the second place, there were more details concerned with it, and the hours more irregular.

She had been sent from the typewriter exchange to a manufacturing concern on the West Side of the city, and how her heart ached as she alighted from the car before the door. The manager was not in, but the time clerk told her to wait. Shortly before 1 o'clock he came in, and Mildred's first opinion of him was that he was firm and decisive and would exercise justice. He called her to his desk and asked that she take some dictation which he wished her to transcribe immediately. After he had read the letter which she handed back he stated that they were willing to pay her eight dollars. "Our stenographer is ill with a fever," he added, "but you can stay with us until she gets better. In the meantime, how-

ever, if you succeed in finding a permanent place take it—do not let us inconvenience you."

Mildred had done a great deal of hard work by herself and it was counting now. The dictation here was difficult but she was able to take it fast and accurately. The ink correction did not appear, as of old, on her letters, and she felt a good deal of satisfaction in folding each night the fair, typewritten pages for the mailing basket. After she had been here six weeks, the manager came to her desk and told her the stenographer was to return. "But your work has been satisfactory," he said, "and any time you feel like referring to us you are at liberty to do so."

"Is it possible," thought Mildred, "that my work has at last been acknowledged? Is this my first recommendation?"

The next office to which Mildred was sent offered to pay nine dollars per week, and the manager asked her for that recommendation. He decided to accept her, assuring her that there was a chance for a raise. He requested that she begin work that morning, and bade Mildred follow him to the room where the stenographers were working, for she was to be hired as one among many. He stopped before a large desk just inside the railing, and introduced her to the "head stenographer," Miss S., a bright, smiling

young woman of no more than twenty-three years of age. She took Mildred to the wardrobe, the door of which she swung open, saying as she did so: "Hang them on the hook near the door, girlie." She pulled the chair out from an oak desk on which was a Fay-Sholes Typewriter, and then proceeded to show her the different kinds of stationery that were used, and where she would find other materials needed in her work. Mildred was assigned to the credit department, where her letters were long and heavy, and required just a little more tact than mere mechanical writing. The manager for whom she worked was not exacting, and she went about with the feeling that everything was work, and hard work, too.

It will not be surprising to learn that the "head stenographer" in this firm should see many characteristics of the young assistant bookkeeper's nature which were much akin to her own. She was sure that some day he would sketch on someone of the large Chicago newspapers, and how eagerly she looked at all his sketches which he brought to her every morning the result of his work the night previous.

And the two typewriter girls—they did not belong to the interfering class, to the jealous or presumptuous. They even told Mildred now and then they wished they could do as good work as

she. One of them, however, was much more addicted to finery than the other, and how fruitless it would be to try and count the number of hours which she spent at her toilet. She was always ready to believe people when they told her she was handsome, and it is not too much to say that there was much in store for Miss R. You must understand that I mean in the way of admiration, for the books were to be audited in January and a young accountant was coming. Sometimes accountants had fallen in love with typewriter girls, "and why should not this one," thought Miss R., "with me?" She heralded his coming with a new velvet waist with gold trimmings, and black silk skirt. His eyes did not fail to appreciate her finery either, for he had not been turning the pages of the ledger a day before he found it necessary to be at her desk requesting the loan of all the implements ever used in clerical life. There were spare minutes, too, during the lunch hour when he could sit beside her in just the way she liked to have him do, for it made the story so real—the thrilling novel she had sat up so many nights until 3 o'clock in the morning to finish reading. She poured all her sorrows into his ear, and what a flood of sympathy came from the heart of the accountant. How often when she looked up from her machine where she

sat copying circular letters she had met his gaze, that gaze which came from a large yellow head which revealed in its very poise that its ancestors had assisted it to its present place in life; but in his eyes Miss R. saw the love light come and go. She had at last found an admirer, and a Chicago admirer, too.

But one morning a group of girls stood sympathizingly over her, as if to say: "It may not yet be true." She was crying affectedly, for upon her desk was a letter which was addressed to the firm for whom she was working, and that fatal letter read: "Please send check to Mrs. G." And the signature was that of the accountant. The manager had dictated to Miss R. an answer. She said she did not care to live. Death would be merciful, for what would life be without the Chicago accountant?

She did not die, nevertheless, and when the lightning figurer returned the next week and, catching sight of the object upon which he had lavished so many attentions, turned toward her the love light gaze, she walked swiftly to his desk, her long skirts trailing behind her, and, picking up a pen near him to sign a letter, she said: "How's Mrs. G.?" Mr. G. hesitated a moment and then answered with suavity: "Oh, she's pretty well." Yet he shuddered lest someone would reveal the fact to Mrs. G. that her name had been jeered at—and so much worse to come from the lips of a slighted typewriter girl.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TWELVE-DOLLAR JOB.

1. Write every word as if your life depended on it.

2. Don't misunderstand; ask over.

3. Make no errors in typewriting; omit nothing in your notes.

4. Never write anything which does not make sense.

5. Do not let a letter leave your hands without reading it.

Mildred had never deviated from these five rules, and attributed her good success to the strict observance of them. She knew, though, that there would be no prospect of her receiving a higher salary in the department in which she was employed before six months more at least, and, knowing that she was doing better work than many who were drawing $11 or $12, she determined to seek another position during her vacation week. She felt a little reluctance at leaving the place where she had had such good success, but there was a dignity in drawing a

good salary, and she was more than ready to do anything to obtain it.

When Mildred met the manager of the firm to which she had been sent he asked her if she were accustomed to handling correspondence alone without dictation. Mildred had not had a great deal of practice along this line, but assured him that she believed herself capable of doing it. After some consideration he agreed to let her work a week, telling her if the firm was not satisfied with her services in that time she could return to her old place, but Mildred did not want to leave. She was willing to expend every effort to do the work she had undertaken.

The manager introduced her to a young woman who did the clerical work of the firm, filing, copying orders, keeping the card systems, etc., and who had a very gracious and pleasing personality. After some time she explained that she intended following a religious life and would enter the missionary school on Indiana avenue that autumn, to become a Methodist deaconess. Mildred was extremely sorry to think of her leaving, for she had become attached to her very quickly.

The manager dictated rapidly, and as the dictation was scientific, it was, of course, very hard; but Mildred was possessed of an unbounded ambition to do her work in a manner which would

bear criticism, and by the dint of hard perseverance soon became familiar with the new terms.

Her week was speeding rapidly, and almost breathlessly she awaited that last day. Would the manager tell her her work had not been satisfactory? Would she have to go back to the old firm and feign she had had a vacation, and be disappointed and discouraged, or would he tell her her work had been satisfactory—that old word which meant so much? Would she hear it? Would she get her envelope with its twelve dollars, and would she continue to receive this amount right along—an example in arithmetical progressions, as it were? This would mean such an encouraging letter to her mother.

When that final Saturday came the manager seemed to be aware that Mildred was anxious to know her fate, and told her to file such-and-such a paper on Monday. This was good news, but did not the manager sometimes mis-speak? If he did this would shatter any faint gleam of hope. Mildred could hardly repress her thanks, however, when the last letter had been dictated and she was told to continue in the firm's employ.

The work in this firm was very heavy, and each employe seemed to work to the full extent of his ability; the bill clerk, the order clerk, the shipping clerk, and even the office boy was rushed.

There was no one, however, who seemed to have a desire to undervalue Mildred's ability, unless the bookkeeper or cashier. The bookkeeper put the bills, invoices and monthly statements in her filing basket, and occasionally gave her letters bearing on the resources of the firm. He had much to say about what the stenographer did and what she knew.

"He gave her a letter the other day and she mixed it all up. He never said at all what she wrote, but let it go, not liking to raise disturbance."

This individual, who had reached the "sunny side" of forty, thought that somewhere or other on the "downslide of life" if the firm had not "kicked up its heels" he would have been a manager sure. In his eyes he bore a certain relationship to the house. "He was worthy of consideration," he said; "he had been there so long." He went to "feed" with the manager and was the only one of the employes who shook hands with the proprietors when they returned home from extended business trips or long vacations. In the manager's absence he was authority, and was depended on by callers for information. In general, as I have noted before, the bookkeeper in this particular firm got consideration, "and they should remember," he added, laying his glasses

on the daybook, "that I have done a whole lot toward the advancement of this company."

He had many pleasant chats, too, with the cashier, at which times all firm affairs were thoroughly raked over. If the stenographer had not been long in their midst they gossiped of her: "And what does John think of it?" The "John" involved being the manager, who was usually dubbed by his first name behind his back. "Oh, my, get in a stenographer who would not make mistakes, and, above all, get a man, who would do the work of those two girls, thereby lightening up the pay roll." It was these individuals who always told the new stenographer that it was one of the rules of the company not to say a word to the help when they were going to discharge them; simply put a slip in the pay envelope, that would be all; and for weeks and weeks the stenographer would open her envelope each Saturday with a beating heart to look for the mournful missive which never came.

The cashier, as well as the bookkeeper, had heart ties with the firm. He was a "gentleman" of the foreign type, and worked for the good of the country, and it is for you and I to ascertain in what way the country is benefited. If he chanced to see a book on Mildred's desk whose gravity was above the "Five Cent Nick Carter

Series" he would sneer at it, telling her she would be great some day if she kept on at that rate. She never "caught his idea" when he gave her any work to do, and when she showed him her membership card on the National Court Reporters' Association he pushed the cash he was counting away from him and queried why they did not make the applicant write 200 words per minute for five minutes instead of 150—then every incompetent stenographer could not become a member. He had had the advantages of a college training and this alone had been enough to craze him when he found himself among people "who had none of these things." "Why even," he thought, "if I never rose any higher than cashier for this company some Lake Shore Drive belle would marry me just for the sake of marrying a cultured man."

He never told Mildred he was from a university. It was not the prevailing fashion—a sort of "don't-mention-it" proposition. It was not necessary to tell the stenographer he was a member of the alumni of an Eastern university—she was, after all, too insignificant.

Ofttimes in Mildred's heart there came piercing pangs of pain at these continuous rebuffs, and then while bitter tears fell fast she murmured: "Oh, Robert, why did you die? Why

were the opportunities of my early life taken from me to leave me to be looked on with contempt by others who have less brains than I?"

But Mildred, when the ledger of life has been closed and the Recording Angel has gathered together the statements of existence, and with the key of time locks the deep vault of earth after having made the last deposit, the bookkeeper and the cashier will have ceased to criticise the stenographer, for it will be of no avail. She will be waiting in that eternal office for her last appointment, but not with notebook and machine, for the Angel of Resurrection has her carbon copies. They are an exact picture of her life. They show the fair unblemished pages and the ones on which she has tried to make reparation.

CHAPTER XXII.

WRITING A NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE. EXAMINATION.

Not long since Mildred had received one of those brown-covered manuals from the United States Civil Service Commission, and after perusing it carefully, concluded it would not be the worst idea in the world to write one of these Government stenographic examinations.

Now, to anyone who has entered the stenographic profession, and who has any ambition whatever, a Civil Service examination is a familiar thing. He knows well that he who wields the pen swiftly enough to write 140 words in one minute gets marked 100 per cent., and if his fingers can play quickly enough over the keyboard of the typewriter to write 65 words in one minute he gets marked that magnanimous 100 per cent. Then there are the grade subjects—arithmetic, rough draft and composition. Nor has every applicant who writes this examination such a desire to go to Washington as one might think he had. He writes it more for the object of convincing himself that he is able to do the best

work, and could fill the best place were it offered him.

The day previous to the event Mildred cleaned her machine carefully. She rubbed its type with benzine and all other "eens" until they shone as if they had never touched a ribbon. After she had cleaned it so thoroughly she was almost afraid to put her finger on a key she called the repair man to see that there was absolutely nothing wrong. She even went to the office across the hall to write her last letter, in order that she might do nothing which would mar the efficiency of this marvelous piece of mechanism for work on the momentous morrow.

She opened her eyes the next morning upon a cold gray day, and sighed when she thought of all there was before her. It was raining, and a long, long shadow was cast over the Chicago post office; yet it looked perfectly familiar with the rain hanging murky-like over the dark, dull red brick, although she did not enter the building with as light a step as she had ofttimes for stamps.

Room 41. Mildred stood at the door with her card of admittance and the tag for her typewriter. The application card was taken first, and Mildred secured a seat near the front. She had with her four pencils, well sharpened at both ends, her pen,

erasers—she had everything; she had omitted nothing. On the bulletin outside the door she read the long list of names of those who were on the eligible list, and felt a pang of remorse when she thought of the many who were waiting, and she had not yet even passed.

Her declaration sheet had been folded, sealed in its envelope and taken up. Mildred was glad that the paper on stenography was to come next. First, a preliminary test was given; then one at eighty words; the next at one hundred; the next one hundred and twenty, and the last—the one of so much gravity—at one hundred and forty. Will your hand falter, Mildred, when you write it? Can you reach it? Does your wrist stiffen and your pencil fall from between your thumb and finger before you reach the last sentence? Do you lose it nearly all, or do you get it in readable shape? You compare the one at one hundred and twenty with the one at one hundred and forty. Which will you take? You have missed two words in the last. Had you better let it go, or ought you to send in the one you wrote at lesser speed? You take the highest, and go steadily to your machine. You gaze longingly at the fair copy which you turn out and you wonder what the Board of Examiners at Washington will say to it. Will they mark it fairly, or will they let it

fall unheeded from their hands and send it back with zero?

Will your hand falter and strike wrong letters when you are given dictation on the typewriter? Will you spell words wrong? Will you make the tabulated statement correct; or will you put the figures in irregular columns? If you do the latter you must remember you will be marked off. Will you make a duplicate of that typewritten copy which they hand you as fair and beautiful looking as the original? You are marked off if you do not.

Can you untangle the loops in this paper on rough draft? Can you read the words whose letters seem to be almost glued together? Can you do it in just ten minutes? If you do it in more you will be marked off.

Can you translate English into Spanish just as well as you can translate Spanish into English? You will have to do it in this examination or else get marked off. Do these long paragraphs stare vaguely up at you, as if to say: "Ye know me not," or do they look smiling down at you and bespeak the words you studied only the day before?

Did you do the last example on that arithmetic paper, making up an account just as it should be? You ought to, for you thought you asked the

bookkeeper nearly everything there is to know about bookkeeping before you came here; but if you put your figures on the credit side when you should have put them on the debit you will be marked off.

Will you walk proudly along the walk to-night with your shoulders thrown back with that air which says: "I never fail?" You had better not. Go modestly along without drawing any notice, for you may read upon that blank which they sent you in glaring black letters: "You have been marked 'OFF.'"

And if you do read this—these awful words—will you go on, or will you stop as if the frost had nipped your efforts as it does an early garden?

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRM FAILS.

Three months later Mildred received her returns of the National Civil Service examination from the Commissioners at Washington, and, much to her satisfaction, found she had received an average of 80 per cent.; but as women stood little chance of appointment unless their mark was 88 per cent. or 90 per cent., she knew it would be some time before she would be assigned. But Mildred was satisfied. So heavy had been the examination she had not expected to gain even the required 70 per cent.

Matters continued to move smoothly, however, in the place in which she was drawing twelve dollars. She had encountered no drawbacks, and although there was not much time for study during office hours, her mind was clear and unruffled for thought at night. She was doing everything which would tend to make her a first-class stenographer. She took testimony occasionally in Court, watched eagerly for the announcement of a lecture, and never failed to report the sermon on Sunday, for she well knew that in a few years she would be doubly repaid for these efforts.

But, Mildred, you cannot see the misty shadow which is fast veiling itself about your young ambitions. You live in the present that is being and in a future planned according to your own workmanship, and that workmanship is only human—it can be as nothing any day. You cannot realize that these hard-wrought future plans now dormant in your active brain might fail to give the designed effect when it comes time to execute them. Yet words cannot make you see it now.

Why was I not a mind painter? A painter of unforeseen events, inasmuch as I am writing this book to portray as best I can events as they come and go in their true fitness to him who puts his trust in the stenographic field? To be simply a painter of words is as naught, for anyone can paint words, and no one can scarcely hope for the skill which would enable him to put upon the canvas a future happening. And ah! if I were only gifted thus, I would paint a picture which the academies would call their grandest, and that picture would be "The Failure of a Firm"—it would mean so much to the commercial world and you, then, Mildred would know your future.

Mildred McElroy had heard of failing firms, but she never thought it would be her lot to get in one. This company had been so prosperous.

She had never dreamed of such a thing as a failure. She knew it was not the worst thing that could befall her in life—yet it was a heartsick feeling.

Now, among the office boys was one lad who was Mildred's favorite. It was he who had the chubby face, the large blue eyes, hair the color of the sickly, dying corn leaves; lips red-dyed, cherry-like, and always wreathed in a smile, and by him Mildred's inkwell was always filled, the typewriter dusted and its letters well cleaned on mornings on which he knew she would make mimeograph copies. One day, though, after he had sat for an unusually long length of time at his humble little desk in the corner without speaking, he called Mildred to him and told her he was mailing letters which the members of the firm were writing in longhand, and when she stroked his curly locks and bid him not be solicitous of things which did not concern him, he heeded not her warning, for he saw upon her face a dark and rifting cloud through which no rainbow dared to creep. "I was at the theatre last night," he added, "and when I came by the office, going home, the lights were still burning."

As a few more days wore themselves away, Mildred noticed that the bookkeepers seemed bound not to disclose some secret. They talked

seriously behind their cages, and when the footfall of a stenographer or clerk was heard returning they lowered their voices into the softest whisper until they died away in the monotonous noise of falling daybook and ledger covers.

She noticed that two or three accountants had come in to audit up the books, and that the directors compared accurately this year's profits with those of years gone by, and then wrote wires with the pen which had heretofore always been done in type.

She noticed that the bill clerk did not bring his bills to the city bookkeeper's desk as promptly as he used to; that the order clerk's 'phone rang repeatedly before he lifted its receiver; that the shipping clerk put wrong addresses upon his packages—and all because the firm was failing.

Neither did the manager call her to his desk to take dictation only in a manner bespeaking: "It will only be a few days longer." She put her book upon the copy holder, she placed a piece of carbon between the paper; she rolled it in over the platen; but the keys almost stuck to the ribbon—they did not respond to her touch as of old, clicking merrily over the white surface, giving away the secrets of the firm's inner life, and 'tis no wonder that they should not, for she struck them with no energetic spirit now. The number

of letters which was written diminished with each day; the work was growing lighter, and for no other reason but that the firm was failing. She pinned the carbon copies to the letters and filed them all away; but the file boxes were not crowded—they needed no transferring, for the firm was failing.

The very atmosphere sighed under the echoes of whispers of consolidations and of business interests in far away cities. Mildred saw it all. She must leave. It was a broken up firm.

But where would she go next? She clasped her hands in thought and paced the floor. She paused before the window, and the rude blast which shook the panes and the seagulls which she watched soaring disconsolately above the mizzen masts of the sleeping ships, and the river's crested cream froth flecking hastily the wind-blown surface of the half-crystallized waves told her that the winter days were fast approaching—days which ever bring to one's mind mocking thoughts of discharges and unrequited trials.

She shuddered with the fear that she might fail again, for to trying critics her work was again to be subjected.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE BOARD OF TRADE.

M. MONTGOMERY,
Stocks, Bonds and Grain,
Chicago Board of Trade,
Chicago Stock Exchange.
Private Wires. 2—La Salle Street.

After the failure of the firm for which Mildred had been working she was sent by the Remington Typewriter Company to the above commission house. She hesitated a moment before opening the office door and wondered how such an applicant as she would "strike" brokers—men whom she thought had scarcely time to consider a personality. But if she could only get it! Fifteen dollars, it seemed a good deal after all.

It had been a busy day in the pit, as the floor bore evidence of, with its bits of yellow paper and the ceaseless march of messenger boys carrying to and fro notations of the tickings of the wire. A marked inactivity and slow depression had characterized the market throughout the week, due to different causes; but nevertheless to-day

was a "boomer" for railroad properties. Reports were anxiously looked for concerning the Harriman and Gould differences; the roads in which these magnates were interested were selling on the "top notch," and in consequence "shorts" were covering hastily.

For the above mentioned reasons no active broker had been in his office during the morning, and it was late in the afternoon when Mildred returned. The man with whom she gained an audience did not resemble in the least the typical broker she had in mind. Instead of being fat and portly, with a double chin, he was of medium height, with a thin, expressive face, set off by large gray eyes which gave him a strange, weary look.

When he read Mildred's name he started strangely in his chair, and then said slowly, and with the greatest precision: "Miss McElroy." There was a moment's silence, and then he remarked frankly: "Your experience, I presume, has not been on the commission line. However, we cannot expect you to be versed in the technicalities of all kinds of business, and you will become accustomed to this grade of work in a few days. Our hours are from nine o'clock until four, and the correspondence is not heavy. We have a few statistical statements and a good many

wires besides; but when we give you work we usually want it done in a hurry. Quite frequently Mr. C. and myself do not require the services of the stenographer until two or three o'clock in the afternoon, and you will see this gives you but little time to write out what we have given you, which is sometimes quite a bulk of work, particularly if trading has been heavy. Of course, you are allowed to work overtime, but we do not want you to come in with the supposition that you are not to have your regular hours, and will give you your work as punctually as possible. At times when you are not occupied you are at liberty to do as you wish."

While this man had been speaking Mildred had noticed a strange look in those gray eyes, which seemed to tell her he was thinking of some past grievance, but their far-away expression forbade the thought it was of her. "Come down to-morrow morning and we will be ready for business." This was the last he said. He opened the door and that piercing glance followed her far down the corridor.

Mildred had every convenience which a stenographer might need in her new surroundings. There were wire baskets for correspondence—for that which had been written and that which was to be filed away; copy holder, fountain pens,

linen paper of the finest texture, embossed stationery, and when she drew her chair from the mahogany desk a white kitten scampered out over the velvet rug and played with the long blue ribbon round its neck.

The bookkeeper employed by this firm was a pleasant, genial individual, quite different from the last ones with whom Mildred had unfortunately met. She loved to look at the laughing baby face he had placed just above the rack where he kept his pens and the picture of the sober-faced girl beside the baby's likeness touched her, too, and after she was there some time the bookkeeper proudly told her it was his wife.

Mildred often heard the senior partner of the firm call up his house and ask the servants as to the health of his invalid wife; but Malcolm Montgomery never telephoned to anyone nearer him than those for whom he watched the marks upon the tape. He worked ceaselessly. He was never weary. It was his sole ambition to make good trades. No doubt, too, this was why he was richer than the other man who never bought stocks only moderately, no matter how tempting market conditions might be.

One day after he had finished the afternoon's dictation Mildred went to her desk to make transcripts of numerous letters. She turned to the last

letter in her book, one which she was desirous of sending out on an early mail, and wrote it out quickly and returned to the broker's office to obtain his signature. Before approaching his desk she paused before the door. The man's eyes were fixed upon a picture—a picture of a girl whose face was round and perfect, the chin oval, the eyes blue, the hair golden yellow, the lips curved in a bewitching smile—just the kind of a face that one reads of in fiction. The cabinet was old—the style one of many years ago. "A sweetheart," thought Mildred; "this is why he at times looks so disconsolate."

When she handed him the letter he looked at her in much the same way as he did on the first day she came, and then reached for a book which lay on one side of his desk—a gilt-edged volume of Tennyson's poems. Mildred had been to answer the telephone in his absence and had dropped it. He trembled as he took it up, and she wondered why he should do so. "The book is very dear to me," said Mildred, "and just now that I was studying the Victorian poets I brought it down. It was father's. He loved Tennyson." She had never told Malcolm Montgomery that her father had been murdered, for some way it hurt her. The broker turned to the fly leaf, and read slowly: "Yale, 18—" "Your father was

an Eastern man, Miss McElroy. I, too, spent my boyhood days in the far East."

It was a faltering, weak signature, though, which he put to the letter, and Mildred was glad to get away. She could not think of any reason why her presence should affect the man so. She consoled herself by thinking, however, that she looked like that woman whom he could never see again.

But was this picture really that of a dead sweetheart?

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE CITY HALL.

The hard school of experience had taught Mildred the value of education, and while it inspired in her an ambition for lofty achievements, it awoke in her as well a true thankfulness for what she did possess—a means of earning a livelihood by which she could cultivate her talents. Her hours as a Board of Trade stenographer were very short, and she had been able to pass nearly all of the entrance examinations to the Chicago University. She knew she could easily earn enough to defray her expenses through school, and that once she had earned a literary degree, combined with her skill in shorthand, it would open the road to her in journalism—that profession for which she had every reason to believe she was adapted.

It was early in September that Mildred saw the following notice in the Chicago Journal:

STENOGRAPHERS.

"The Civil Service Commission of the City of Chicago will hold an original entrance examina-

tion for stenographers, official service, Division C, Grade 2, on Wednesday, November 26, 19—, at 9.00 A. M., room 400, City Hall.

"The scope of this examination will be penmanship, as shown in examination papers—writing from dictation, or copying, rough draft, spelling, arithmetic, letter writing, and will also include questions covering the applicant's knowledge of special subjects pertaining to stenography and typewriting."

And Mildred had written it, and passed on 96 per cent., a mark which had merited her appointment, which she had received to-day. A $75 salary! Would she take it? It meant a raise of $10 more in the month than she was now drawing, yet when she recalled all she had heard of injustices which existed in cities where Civil Service reform existed, she hesitated. She hesitated and thought well on what might confront her during that long, long six months she would be on probation. Yet she could not refuse it; it was too tempting an offer. Carefully, yet almost reluctantly, she wrote her last letter, for she knew it was the last time; she would never again write of the certainties or uncertainties of stocks. Malcolm Montgomery signed it, and then said: "You will come in and see me now and then, Miss McElroy, and let me know how

you get on. I wish you every success." This was all after a friendly handclasp.

Then Mildred closed her desk for the last time —closed it for another. Down the last letter on her notebook she struck a long line, just as if she were doing it so she would know the next day where she left off. She put sharp points on her pencils for the morrow's correspondence, as had been her usual custom; she listened for the clock ticks, and how much louder they sounded; she put her finger on the electric button and turned out the light. It put her almost in darkness, but yet a faint gas jet burned dimly in the corner over the file cases, and in one of its wasting, flickering gleams she read for the last time all there was on the black slate in the corner, then closed the door behind her and went out to face the world's treacherous and harrowing doubtfulness again.

When she reached her office in the City Hall the next morning, at 9.00 A. M. sharp, a dark-skinned young woman arose from her desk to meet her. Mildred highly appreciated the girl's friendliness, as we are all apt to when among strangers.

"Your name is McElroy," she said inquiringly.

"Yes."

"There were four or five on the list between you and I. You know my name, of course—De

Forest; but what I was going to tell you: There were too many waived before you. Oh, I don't know, the proposition is too good to be wholesome."

"Well, what were their reasons for waiving?"

"Search me. Scared out. I can call it nothing else. I know they would not refuse a $75 job unless there was a 'nigger' in the fence somewhere. Did they tell you you would be raised?"

"They said they were starting them in on $75; that was all."

"Well, my opinion is that someone is on the list below you—stands in, you know—a political puller; and, of course, in order to get them in they must first get rid of all before. I am pretty positive that is it, for I have kept the list standing for dear knows how long, not a woman being appointed in that time. Ninety-eight per cent., you know, is pretty high, and anyway, I'm a reinstatement. My probation has been served, and I tell you I served it dearly, and they consequently cannot remove me without serving papers. Here is Mr. Longstreet. Mr. Longstreet, she's the sweetest thing ever happened. You see I'm attached to her already."

Mildred found Mr. Longstreet an obliging young man, very competent and a well wisher to others. At least, Mildred thought him friendly disposed toward her.

During the course of the morning she was given a number of letters by different members of the Board, and came out very successful on them for a first trial. Miss De Forest asked that she might look them over before they were sent out, and scrutinized them closely to see if there was anything scratched out or inserted. When lunch time came she insisted on Mildred going out with her for "a bite," as she put it, after having first gained Mr. Longstreet's consent. While Mildred was putting away some papers on her desk Miss De Forest drew from one of her drawers a Uneeda biscuit box, and applied on one corner of a linen towel a quantity of the powder which the box contained, and proceeded to besmear her dark features very freely with it.

"Will you not ruin your complexion?" said Mildred in an undertone.

"Why, no, honey; 'tis harmless as flour, and besides gives a florid tint to my black visage for at least an hour or two. But I must really go to the president of the Board," she explained, as she walked down the hall, "and see if he'll not let me draw my pay before the month is up. Every dollar I have is soaked up in a patent on the Underwood shift key. Consequently I'm just to pieces."

"Why, you look all right," said Mildred sympathetically.

"I should think I did look all right," was Miss De Forest's exclamation. "The ruffle on this old petticoat almost torn off, and it just come within one of tripping me up this morning and throwing me into a North Clark street car; an' now it's ripped again. But I'll glide in here," she added, as she neared the Schiller Theatre building, "and loop it up temporarily with pins or some of these Niagara clips, which I have here in my pocketbook."

Mildred did not eat very much luncheon that day, so filled with apprehension was she at Miss De Forest's remarks, and on returning for the afternoon went diligently to work, determined to learn more of the people by whom she had been employed.

"Of the three for whom you are working," explained Miss De Forest, "you will have the most trouble with that O'Lifferty, and I want to impress on you right now that the girl on the list below you stands in with all his pals; neither have I much comment to make on that Secretary Jenks, and, honey, when it comes your turn to file papers in there with him you'll appreciate more what I tell you now. I just cannot 'go' one of those interfering bachelor secretaries, whose whole source of information comes from what they remember out of Donald Mitchell's

'Reveries of a Bachelor,' or J. M. Barrie's 'When a Man's Single.' "

Mildred did not, however, give much credence to her friend's words, and resolved to ask Mr. Longstreet for his opinion before forming any conclusions. Yet as time went on Mr. Jenks quite frequently asked if she thought she would like to remain working for the Board, and as if she had ever met quite such a particular people as they were. Mr. O'Lifferty's letters, too, began to disagree very markedly with shorthand notes, and now that things had reached this crisis Mildred queried Miss De Forest more than ever as to her knowledge of personal matters. Miss De Forest only explained, however, that there was no use; that she surmised there was an intended "fire" in view. She knew the next girl on the list was a friend; that settled it.

"If you had worked under the Civil Service the length of time I have, and seen the lay-offs and the requests for leaves of absence, etc., you'd be easier convinced of what was going to happen. And let me tell you, honey—this between you and I—you'll never get along in these political jobs unless you try and get on the good side of the Aldermanic push, and corral some influence. Now, two of the most prominent political intriguers in the City Hall signed my voucher—

that is, they had always been prominent in Democratic campaigning, putting up money for vote-buying, etc. This, you see, leaves me in a far different light than you are in. If this Board were to file papers on me to-day they know all I would have to do would be to whistle and their 'hash' would be settled. Anyway, just touch a Frenchman—you know—that's all you have to do.

"Yet, do you remember, honey, how Solomon said: 'Seest thou a man diligent in his work—he shall stand before kings and not before mean men.' Now, if you're not diligent in your work I don't know who is, so just continue right along in the course you are in, and in case any furious whirlwind presents itself the secretary of the Commission will show you justice. I know him well, and if I were to just give you an introduction his friendship for you would be established henceforward."

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNDER THE COUNTY.

"The president of this Board would just let you starve before he'd grant you the least concession," remarked Miss De Forest one rainy morning, as she sat by the radiator drying her feet. I have actually begged of him to let me draw my pay before the end of the month; and my shoes speak for themselves.

"Then this article here by Dorothy Dix has just roiled me up this morning," she continued, bringing her fist down on the table, as she drew from under her coat the editorial sheet of last Sunday's Chicago American, and passed it on to Mildred: 'Birds of Paradise'—that's a nice how-d'ye-do—such birds as us can certainly show whereof we sing. It is these bare-faced injustices, as you and I see going right on to-day, that licenses such as Dix to open up and say these things; they know the props they are leaning against. And just take a squint at that cartoon," added Miss De Forest, her face reddening still deeper. "Makes it's employer's wife look like thirty cents. I have yet to find the firm in this

city whose stenographer makes the manager's wife look like thirty cents, but there is one thing that I do know, and that is that if it were not for his stenographer more than one manager would go out the front door with a 30-cent can tied to his coat tail. Get to be a reporter, a proof reader, a correspondent and everything else there is imaginable to get to be on this mundane sphere, and then be dubbed a 'bird.' "

"It is only wasting time to talk about such things, Miss De Forest," said Mildred quietly, as she handed back the paper. It is plain to see that such insipid remarks are pointed at the stenographer all because of the fact that there are a few non-progressive, adventurous people who presume to dabble in shorthand, but these are the exception, not the rule. You know from your own experience that even this class is seldom found except among girls who hold influence with some member of the firm for whom they work, put there, no doubt, for social purposes more than for any other. We cannot expect to conquer the world, only by striving to rise above the common level. Then we do not need to talk; but when we allow ourselves to notice such statements as have been quoted here, we only satisfy the world who believe us to be powerless to prove even what we do."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Miss De Forest excitedly, "I often ask myself why I talk, but when you see everyone throwing cuts at you right and left —but dear, 'such is life in the great city.' Yet there's no chance in here for a raise, honey, and you know this is just what makes me so rampant at times. What's seventy dollars when you have to pay hotel board? A woman gets a certain respect and protection when working under these services, and every one of these lads who have their 'finger on the button,' are 'onto it;" you bet they'll give no woman one of these positions unless she has her clutch on a municipal strap. If there's anything good to be had their finger's in the pie. They are too well versed on the advantages of the 60-day clause to suit me. If they have any old bum on the string who can carve out a few scratches, providing he's a forty-second cousin they'll keep him in if it's possible to do so. I remember once having an experience with a species of this sort. He stayed his sixty days, and then went over to write the examination. I lent him this Underwood machine, but the crazy fool did not have sense enough to bring the carriage from left to right or right to left; the substance of about all he knew of a typewriter was how to erase.

"But let me tell you, they've no more use for

me in here than they have for you, only just that I make them come to time with my probation served off. I'm simply tired of having my business riddled all over as if I was of no account. Now, Mike, that office boy, knows more about waivers, leaves of absences, reinstatements, hold-overs, 'fires,' etc., than any corporation lawyer. I tell you, Miss McElroy, a chap like him might better be put at common labor than be kept hanging round a place like this—a Weary Willie will be manufactured out of him, that'll be the outcome. He was round to my desk this morning telling me what he had caught wind of from so and so and so and so, but I just give him a good swift box in the side of the head, for I'll not be pestered by him; but, going back to what I meant to impart to you, he asked me if I'd heard anything more as to how they liked you. This tried my patience to the limit, and I told him to chase himself out as quick as his legs could carry him; but, I can tell you, 'honey,' there's a storm brewing for there's no surer barometer than an office boy.

"Hush! there he is now," whispered Miss De Forest, as the boy opened the gate and handed a letter to Mildred.

"My Dear Madam:

"I am sorry to say that the managers of the departments in which you have been employed report your work 'not satisfactory.'

"As you know, you were placed here on trial, and we now think you have been given as long and fair a one as is possible. If you wish, however, to remain a few days longer in order to secure another place, I would be glad to arrange for it.

"We will, however, call for another stenographer from the Civil Service Commission soon.

"Yours very truly,

"_____, President."

"It is just as I expected," exclaimed Miss De Forest. "They have been digging like grave-robbers to get to that girl next to you. You got 96 per cent., but I suppose people who pass examinations cannot do work. Now, look at the way they have treated you. Put you on the old rickety machine that no one else could work on, and I have asked Mr. Longstreet again and again why they did not fit you up as you should be, but the lad would not give me a satisfactory answer. He's a boy, Miss McElroy, that you cannot get much valuable information out of; yet, you should have asked for a leave of absence sooner; I gave you warning enough. However,

do not let this phase you in writing the County examination to-morrow."

"That's so, it is to-morrow," said Mildred, wearily, and how can I ever get a machine up there and bring myself down to write it in all this trouble?"

"Never you mind, 'honey,' I'll see to the typewriter, and everything else that you need, and you confer with Mr. Longstreet when he comes in. If they refuse to give you a leave of absence, fight it out anyway. You are able to show you are competent to do work. You have passed the National Service examination (and I'm sure there's none of the 'hold-over push' in this House could do it), and your literary productions certainly prove you can use correst English in a business letter. It is that O'Lifferty that's at the root of this. I have every reason to know he could find no fault with your work, if he told the truth, and even if he was so cowardly he dare not say his soul was his own, he should have told you about this and not let it crashed on you all at once—that is, as long as he pretended to be so friendly."

The result was that Mildred saw Mr. Longstreet, and after some consideration it was decided that it would be best to ask for a leave of absence for three months, which, if granted, and

she did not return after thirty days, would restore her name to the list. Whether or no, it would be granted was the question, but Mildred resolved to let things work themselves out as best they could, and at the earnest request of Miss De Forest, did not give up the plan of writing the County examination the next day.

"You will pass ahead of any of those other women," was Miss De Forest's comment, and $80 is no small thing to toss over your shoulder, and if 'twas not for my having such a strong cinch, being a reinstatement, I'd take a 'jump in the air' at it myself."

"You have been granted a leave of absence, Miss McElroy," said Mr. Longstreet the next day. It has been approved by the Board, and I consider you were very fortunate to get out of it as well as you have. It will restore your name to the list, and I hope will put you in line for a still more remunerative position in the City Hall."

The morning on which Mildred left Mr. Jenks was in high spirits, and wore one of his brightest plaid vests in honor of the occasion. Mr. O'Lifferty did not press the button for a stenographer, preferring to save what work he had for the next young woman whose relatives and friends had been so instrumental in working him into his present position.

It was only a few weeks after Mildred left that she received notification that she was second to be assigned on the County Civil Service list. There were two positions open when the examination was called, and consequently Mildred came in for the second.

Miss De Forest had watched for the posting of the eligible list, and called upon Mildred the first morning after she took her position. "Well, 'honey,'" was her first exclamation, "I am glad to see you settled and drawing money again from the public coffers. I wish my soul were possessed with such peace. They have altogether too much to say about people around this City Hall to suit me, and my hair would be white before I could ever put these 'political grafters' to a 'finish.'"

Mildred expressed her thankfulness for the many kindnesses that had been shown her during the short time they had been together, but Miss De Forest only said: "No thanks need be offered, 'honey.' Gratification is liberal reward enough for me. You certainly exhibited clear, cool judgment throughout the whole 'fracas,' for the definition of judgment in its crude sense is really, 'the thing you possess when you don't fly at people when you're mad and pick their eyes out.'"

Upon leaving the office that day Mildred made the suggestion to Miss De Forest that she try to obtain the position of Spanish translator and correspondent in some one of the new possessions.

"Yes, 'honey,'" she replied, "that would be quite suitable for me; but, if I should go away you'd be sure to get married, and then the best part of life for me would be gone. Everybody likes the fair, white-skinned people who do not 'step on etiquette'—while I'm dark and ugly; not fit even to be an angel; for they have to be white as snow else the Lord don't want them, and, anyway, how'd I look in wings?

"So, adieu, 'honey.' Get them to remove the probation in two months. I must be off."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A REJECTED LOVER.

Some months after Mildred took her position in the County Building the people with whom she had been living since Lizzie's departure announced to her their intention of going to New York city. As considerable property had been left them by a relative, and life in Chicago, owing to their slender income, had been more of an effort than a comfort, they were delighted with the though of going except for the fact that Mildred could not be with them.

"If I would see Bishop Ferguson," said Mildred to her landlady, "I wonder if he would not know of some one with whom I could live who would not seem like a stranger?"

"I would suggest your seeing him this evening," said the kind woman, "for I know the rector would be instrumental in finding you just such place."

Mildred immediately telephoned to the minister's house and, being told he was in, lost no time in going to him.

During the course of their conversation the

maid knocked on the minister's study and, opening the door at his bidding, announced Mrs. Glendowen.

"Tell her to come in, Jennie. She is just who I wanted to see, Mildred," said the old minister, smiling.

"You must know Miss McElroy, Mrs. Glendowen; she is one of our hardest working young people, and our boys and girls do not see just how they could get along without the clever stories which she writes in our Sunday school magazines."

She offered Mildred her finely-gloved hand, remarking kindly: "You do not look strong; Dr. Ferguson is asking you to write too much for us."

"She has not been quite herself since her mother's death," said the minister, "and I wish to say to you, Mrs. Glendowen, that the friends with whom she has been living are leaving the city, and at the present time I am much interested in finding her a good home."

"Ah! yes, Dr. Ferguson, so fortunate that I should have come in at this time. You know I have been so lonely ever since little Marcella died, and as my husband's business necessitates his being in the East so much more this year, I believe—if Miss EcElroy would care to be with

us—we could get along amicably." Mildred was much gratified at the way in which her friend received her, and would have thought herself extraordinarily favored had she not soon found much to her displeasure that Malcolm Montgomery was one of their personal friends. Mildred did not wish to meet the broker more than was in her power to help, for her own intuition told her he had no uncommon interest in her. Since she had severed her connection with his office she had met with him only occasionally, and then it had been of a formal nature. She could not alter matters, however, and tried to think the conclusions she had drawn of him were false. She thought of the picture at which she saw him look so long and earnestly on that autumn day, and hoped he would never be able to forget her, whose likeness it represented.

But the season of spring passed into summer, and still nothing new characterized Mildred's life as a Civil Service stenographer. It was the same routine—a sameness of duties, so peculiar to all classes of work in the building on the city's square, where on your ears is ever falling the sound of the gavel and sonorous notes from Justice-giving officers of the Court.

She had this morning, owing to a reporter's illness, been called in to take evidence in an im-

portant trial in which the County Attorney was interested. So absorbed was she in her work that she had not noticed who any of the attorneys or witnesses were; but now that the argument for the defense had been called, she laid aside her pen and listened. That voice which was saying: "Gentlemen of the jury"—was it not familiar? Had she not heard it elsewhere? Could it be—it really was the ambitious boy whom she had met so many years ago in the shorthand school—Charles Fontebrau.

The clerk announced the time for adjournment.

The young attorney looked toward the reporter, and he knew her.

"Why, Miss McElroy, I have often wondered ever since I left you that day in the typewriter exchange whether you ever got a position or not. You have not studied law?"

"No; I have discovered my talents lie in an entirely different direction from law. I have long ago decided I was not 'cut out' for it, and have placed my hopes in literature. I have been writing a little, but do not receive much remuneration for my work yet, except in the way of compliments."

"But you should not be discouraged because of that fact, Miss McElroy; one has to do a good many things in law for which he must be con-

tent to take his pay in laurels. Yet I am quite satisfied; I am fortunate enough to be connected with a very well-known law firm here—H.—— & N——. I did Court Reporting for a while after I left the University, and they not only gave me their work, but were instrumental in procuring for me the work of other attorneys, and after some time took me in as partner."

"Their offices are in the Stock Exchange Building?"

"Yes."

"Then you must know Malcolm Montgomery, Mr. Fontebrau. They were his legal advisers."

"Yes, to be sure, I knew Malcolm Montgomery; and you worked for him, Miss McElroy? Indeed, I am quite interested and surprised. You know, then, how much interest he takes in young people. He has done so much for me, and has frequently insisted on paying excessive fees for small service when he would not think of paying the other attorneys any more than was legally due them."

"Yes, it is something commendable that one engaged in his line of work should have so much patience and sympathy with those who are trying to gain a foot-hold in professional fields."

"He has relatives in my home city—yet I believe he is an Eastern man."

"You have met his cousin, then, Alice Creighton? Mr. Montgomery has told me a great deal of her. He is in the South now, and I think intends bringing her back with him for the purpose of having her attend one of the convent schools here."

"Yes, I know of the Creightons in New Orleans. They were members of the Cathedral which I attended. Creighton, before his death, invested a good deal of capital in manufacturing enterprises in New Orleans, and lost considerable in it, but, nevertheless, left something over half a million to this only child."

Mildred frequently met Charles Fontebrau in the days which followed, and their friendship grew stronger. There was much satisfaction in talking over the events which occurred in the time which had elapsed since they met one another, and an equal amount in talking of what the future held, for Charles Fontebrau seemed to be of the same opinion as Mildred in many things. She often asked herself, though, if this Platonic friendship (which she had hitherto so strongly believed in) would continue. In Charles Fontebrau's nature she saw many qualities which she admired; yet, on the other hand, she saw many defective ones, which counterbalanced the good ones. Her keen perception told her there

were many weak points in his character—a desire to lean on others—and even though he wished it she knew it would be impossible for him to enlist his sympathies with her when he did not follow her profession.

But Charles Fontebrau, who was of an impulsive temperament, who formed conclusions without deliberation, and who acted hastily—did he look upon this Platonic friendship in the same light in which Mildred did?

The hands of the clock pointed to after five one night, and Mildred was just about to close her desk, when the office door was opened by—Charles Fontebrau.

"I was in the building, Miss McElroy, so I thought I would drop in and tell you of my good success. I have been appointed Master in Chancery. I suppose, too, you will regard it with disfavor because of the fact that you will have to meet me a little more than formerly." There was a winning smile upon his face, and he continued: "Yet, I do not think I shall always continue to practice law in Chicago, for, despite the success I have had here, I know I would do better among my own people."

"I think you are quite right, Mr. Fontebrau, in thinking you would do better in the South; your abilities would be recognized much sooner

than in one of the large cities of the North. But you speak of your presence being disagreeable to me, and I am quite sure you made the statement just to provoke me for a sarcastic answer. So I will keep my views from you and you can guess what they are. I am sorry I will be with you only for a few more days. I have now completed two years of University work by study in the University College evenings and Saturday afternoons in the Fine Arts Building; but the remaining two years I will have to take in the University; so I suppose there is no other alternative but to close my desk and forget all about legal phraseology for a time. I do not doubt but what I can do nearly as good newspaper writing now as I could do after that time, but that is not the matter in question; it is the fact that my work will not be given the precedence it would if I were to possess a literary degree."

"Why, Miss McElroy, I cannot bring myself to think you are going away. It seems to me you will not think the same then as you do now."

"But why do you think I would be different, Mr. Fontebrau? I am sure a couple of hard years' work will not hurt me."

"Oh, it is not that exactly. I was only thinking on some plans I had in mind which I fear you will not sanction if I wait until then. You must

know it, Miss McElroy, I want you when those two years are over—I want you to come with me to the Southland, for I love you. I cannot help it. The years which I have known you have taught me to. Oh! Mildred, you would not be dissatisfied to do it, would——"

"I do not want you to press me further, Mr. Fontebrau. I cannot listen and I fear to wound your feelings. You do not know your mind. You think you love me, but you do not; and I can see that in future years, when the novelty of early fancies had worn away, you would see many things about me with which you would be displeased."

A solemn stillness followed her words, broken only by the clock ticks.

"I never thought, Miss McElroy, that a few moments could so shatter the hopes which I had so long cherished."

"But it is for the best, Mr. Fontebrau, and you will be my friend still."

"It is as you say, Miss McElroy.

His hand took hers—a click or two on mosaic—the opening and shutting of the elevator door—and Mildred was alone, alone to think and ponder over how much the last few moments had wrought.

Would Charles Fontebrau soon forget her? Or

would she linger in his memory forever, and when he thought of those words she had uttered, would a dart of pain pierce the heart's weak tendrils?

And while Mildred watched through the window in the twilight, which was fast engulfing the pigeons hovering about the great black corner pillars of the building, within the gates of the "Crescent City" under a broad-leafed palmetto, a black-haired girl looked long and hard at the gypsy warning on a gum wrapping paper, which told her she would marry a Northern man. "I wonder what he looks like?" thought the girl, "and if he ever loved another?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE STOCK BROKER'S WARD.

It was later than Mildred's usual hour this morning, and after dropping some pennies to the newsboy in the Hyde Park station, she hastily caught up a Record-Herald and hurried through the door to board a coming Illinois Central Express train. There had been a phenomenal raise in copper and Mildred read with avidity the stock notes with which she had been familiarized so long.

"Park Row—Central Station," said the conductor, and Mildred folded her newspaper, rested her arm on the windowsill and looked out yonder over the boulevard. The seat directly in front of her had just been vacated and in a moment a young man of lithe build, dressed in serge suit, and noticeably white linen, dropped carelessly into it. Conscious of some one's presence before her, Mildred turned her eyes from the window upon the stranger, only to find them fastened rather peculiarly upon her.

"I wonder where he has ever seen me," thought Mildred; "there is certainly something about me

which interests him. I would like to know what his profession is, and if he gets off at Randolph street. I will walk slowly behind him, just to verify my opinion. I think he is a professor in the Chicago University, and will get off at Randolph street, and take a Cottage Grove avenue car out to the Plaisance."

"Van Buren;" the young man looked at her again half-askance, and then at the pocketbook lying in her lap, and walked quickly out of the train.

"I am beat on my guess for once," thought Mildred, laughing, "but maybe he is a professor of music, and will end his journey at Steinway Hall or the Chicago Musical College; he is certainly not a Board of Trade man, or a salesman in Siegel-Cooper's or Rothschild's."

When Mildred got up at the Randolph street station something dropped at her feet, and on picking it up she found it to be the piece of paper with the day's memorandum which she had put in her purse.

"It must have been on my lap," she thought, "and I wonder if he read this stuff:

"Write Evening Post about next serial. See Managing Editor—Journal Office—5:30 o'clock."

She little thought, though, that 'ere she had reached the Washington street side of the County

building that Malcolm Montgomery was looking up at this same individual and saying:

"You have not been in to see me of late, Arthur. What has the world been doing to you?"

The young reporter drew a chair close to the stock broker and said: "Everything has gone well with me; have been out to Springfield doing a little legislative reporting, that is all."

"And you would not have come in to see me this morning either, I warrant," said the broker, quizzically, "if it had not been that you wanted to get the state of the day's market."

The face of the young man lit up by a benign smile as he answered: "I will never forget, Mr. Montgomery, what you have done for me; death alone can take away that remembrance."

Arthur Fairfield was an orphan, and this morning Malcolm Montgomery's mind went swiftly back ten years and he saw before him again the thin, almost-starved looking face of the boy in the shabby black clothes, who had come before him in answer to his advertisement in the Tribune for office boy. Malcolm Montgomery saw a superiority in his nature then which marked him as being different from the other urchins who stood beside him waiting for their chance. From the humble guise of an errand-boy he had passed to the next higher step—copying clerk, and, as

time went on, the broker discovered that the boy in whom he had first taken only a charitable interest was well deserving of his attention; "he is not fit to be a mere clerk," thought the stern man, "and if he wants learning it shall never be denied him while I live. What good does my vast store of wealth do me when no one profits by its reward." While the man watched the boy's progress, he saw that the young mind was unfolding in a remarkable way. He was not tempted to enter into bucket-shop deals like the other settling-clerks with whom he worked; while their thoughts were upon wild, inconceivable speculations, his were upon books.

It was on an August morning that the broker called Arthur to him and much surprised him by asking if he did not wish to take a college course. "You have studied diligently," said the man—"you have talents. Do not bury them. You never shall while Malcolm Montgomery holds the tape."

"I prefer some one of the Eastern Colleges," this was all the broker said, after handing him a check with which would have taken Arthur years to earn."

It was in the Columbia University in New York city that Arthur Fairfield began a course in Commerce and Politics, and as month after month went by, college discipline tended to

strengthen the great literary ability of which the boy was possessed. During his senior year he wrote many urgent letters as to whether he would return to Chicago or remain in New York city. The West was not as advanced in many ways, the broker reasoned, as the East, and Arthur's career, he was certain, would be much smoother where he did not have long-established aristocracy with which to compete. "Yes, I will bring him back to Chicago," he thought, "and my life will be much happier, too, if he is near me."

So life's tide had ebbed and flowed. To Arthur Fairfield it had brought success in the newspaper field. To Malcolm Montgomery, no reverses in the purchase or sale of stocks. This morning "there was nothing doing," as the broker termed it, on either La Salle or Wall street, and he, therefore, appreciated the opportunity of a pleasant chat with Arthur.

"I am considering the offer of foreign correspondent in the French capital," the young man was saying, "but hardly think I will take it unless——"

"Oh, Cousin Malcolm!" and their conversation ceased at the sound of a girlish voice.

"What is troubling you, my girl," said the broker.

"Oh, I was down town shopping," she replied,

"and thought I would come in and see if I could not make you promise to take me to the football game to-morrow—it's between St. Vincent's and St. Ignatius, you know; no school this week, and if I can't go, guess I will go out of town to 'kill time.'"

The girl was not a day over sixteen, and her white, pink-flushed face nestled down comfortably in her furs, while the white plumes on the grayish-blue hat shaded the brown eyes which looked laughingly into those of her older cousin.

"I guess we'll arrange to entertain you all right, Alice," answered the broker. "This is my baby cousin, Arthur," he continued, "and you see I have just reason to be proud of her. She has come to me all the way from the Southland to finish her school work."

The girl looked admiringly at Arthur Fairfield's intellectual face, and as she did so a thought flashed into the broker's mind. "Alice—if I could only make her Arthur's wife, instead of being compelled to see her take up with some one like Charles Fontebrau, and I know the fellow is doing everything in the world to get her. Eight hundred thousand dollars in her own name—what would eight hundred thousand dollars do for Arthur Fairfield? I will mention the subject to him to-day when I go to lunch. I do not care to

see any poor attorney, in whom I have no particular interest, basking in the orange groves of any one to whom I am related, if my interference would help matters any.

"Where shall it be, Arthur?" he said, glancing at the clock, whose hands were pointing to 12.00 o'clock. "Over at the Hamilton?"

"I think they can serve us," answered the journalist; "their menu has been pretty good of late."

Then the two men left the office and walked down La Salle street in the direction of the club-rooms on Madison street.

"Did you see my pretty cousin?" said the broker, as he sipped at a glass of sherry wine.

"Yes, I did, and presume, dear Montgomery, this is a gentle way you have of telling me I ought to ask her some day to be my wife. You have not gone into the match-making business, have you? Although I would not be surprised now that Diamond Match is touching 110," and the young man laughed heartily.

The broker smiled dryly as he answered: "You are getting too fond of puns, Arthur; the newspaper business is spoiling you; but, coming back to my old subject, it would be a safe investment. Money means a great deal to you; it would lift you into just the sphere that would be becom-

ing to your rank, and, remember—the Creightons and Montgomerys can boast of their ancestry."

"You are proud of your race," said Arthur Fairfield, with a touch of sarcasm; but I can assure you right now, race, money and all, you could never induce me to marry such a wife. How could I spend my life with a woman of this type? A flippant little flower whom I would grow tired of in a week. I shall never marry unless sometime I may chance to meet a woman whose sentiments are much the same as my own. If she possessed a strong intellect, was striving for the same citadels and sympathized with me and appreciated my work, then, Malcolm Montgomery, I would love her."

"I am afraid you would have a hard time finding her," said the broker, "for 'Garden City' boasts too few of such regal beauties."

"Then I shall live in single blessedness like my benefactor," said the journalist, pushing back his plate.

"You cannot say that with justice, my boy," answered the man, "for you have not seen my years, and when you have perhaps you will have met her; at least, I hope such will be the case."

And he did hope so—unless he should meet that very one whom he knew if he ever did he would love, for was she not all Arthur Fairfield told him he wanted in a woman?"

"Ah! if he ever does," thought the broker, sadly, "the web of my plans would be brushed away."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PLANNING A JOURNALISTIC CAREER.

"Great is Journalism. Is not every Able Editor a Ruler of the World, being a persuader of it, though self-elected, yet sanctioned by the sale of his Numbers?"

It was approaching the season of Commencement at the University on the Plaisance, and among a number of other college women, Mildred was going at her usual hour from Kelly Hall to Kent Theater—for it was final examination week for the seniors.

Examination week—and in a few days Mildred would have earned the degree of Ph. B. After leaving college her intention was to follow the profession of Journalism and Reporting, and to this end she had studied much upon subjects which bore directly on journalistic work. From among numerous works she had selected for intense study, Darwin, for his thoughts on evolution; Ruskin, for art; Carlyle, whose sole endeavor was to exalt labor to a citadel, and Macaulay and Green, who have written history from the people's point of view. She had written editorials for the University paper, and short stories and

articles which were printed by small journals; but Mildred's success did not flatter her. She realized fully the hardships which awaited her on the thorny paths of the newspaper field. She had read accounts in English books of the obstacles with which women meet on the press of the Old World, and of all the disadvantages incident to Fleet street and the Strand, and often wondered if she would encounter such opposition in taking legislative notes in Springfield as women do in the gallery in England. She wondered what work in the sphere of reporting would be open to her. She could not think of being a society reporter, that lot which inevitably falls to a woman who undertakes to do anything on the press. She could see nothing ennobling about the monotonous duties of interviewing fashionable women as to their clubs, weddings, afternoon teas, etc.; neither did she see any reason why her ability and experience in note-taking would not make her services valuable as a verbatim reporter. She almost wished herself in England at the time Charles Dickens said he had trained that savage stenography; was reporting in Parliament and wallowing in words. She could imagine herself holding a note-book of narrow pages and a fountain pen while she performed commendably her part in taking a lecture. She

would be member of a "ring" then, she thought, and would have gained an enviable reputation for never breaking it, for the hair-line notes of shorthand were sure to serve her quite as well as Woodfall's memory did in the eighteenth century.

She did not want to work on space. She wanted to baffle with the genuine every-day work of a beginning reporter. There would be discouragements, she well knew, and, on the other hand, there would be exciting struggles which would be sure to end in victories. There would be competitors whose ability and learning could not be questioned, yet Mildred hoped for the strength to surpass all these things and illuminate the path of literature in just such a brilliant way as John Shirley Brooks, John Russell, Charles Dickens or Justin McCarthy.

"I want you to go with me to the theater to-night, Mildred," said Mrs. Glendowen, a few weeks after Commencement. "To-night is the first of Richard Mansfield's annual Chicago engagement; he will be at The Illinois. To see something of the world's less serious side is sometimes helpful mentally as well as physically, and you will wear one of my new wraps, too, for I mean to see that you are made very attractive. Mr. Montgomery will also at-

tend the theater to-night with a journalist, a young man in whom he has a great deal of interest. Mr. Glendowen tells me that he was very poor, being at one time a clerk in Mr. Montgomery's office. It was then that the broker took a great interest in him, and afterwards paid his way through Columbia University. This, no doubt, is why he estimates the young man's qualities so highly, and is desirous that his niece, Alice, should marry him. He has great ideas of keeping strictly within his own circle of society. And, dear Alice! that frivolous child. She finds no more society in such a man as Fairfield than in a statue.

"But we have been chatting too long. Henry has the carriage waiting for us now." It was not yet eight o'clock when they crossed Michigan Boulevard, where rubber-tired hansoms and autos glided noiselessly, yet rapidly, along, and in a few moments coachmen were lifting the occupants out before the entrance of the theater near the Lake Front. It was to be a crowded house to-night, for it had been impossible to obtain tickets during the last four or five days.

The box adjoining that of the Glendowen's was Malcolm Montgomery's, and Mildred soon found herself face to face with the broker. He was not alone, and when he turned to them and

said, "Mrs. Glendowen, Miss McElroy—Mr. Fairfield," Mildred was sure the young man in the well-fitting dress suit was the same one whom she recalled having seen on the Illinois Central train, and she knew now why he was so interested in the notation she had dropped.

She was leaving the theater—leaving Arthur Fairfield and Malcolm Montgomery; Arthur Fairfield she would perhaps never see again, and she was almost willing to confess that she cared to. And Malcolm Montgomery she would see again, and how much rather she would not.

Mildred did not know Malcolm Montgomery's thoughts as he sat alone to-night in his home on Castlewood Terrace, after this meeting at the theater: "I am sorry I was forced to introduce him to her. She seemed to exert a peculiar influence over him—Arthur Fairfield, who has seen and been so popular with New York and Chicago belles. Mildred McElroy would not be the right sort of a wife for him. Why don't he stay in the circle I put him in. I like Arthur, to be sure, but why cannot he see it would be much better to marry a woman of wealth? Alice—I know I could make her love him; but he does not seem to be able to appreciate one of her qualities. After all the annoyance I went to get him to take her here to-night he got out of it. I will not let him

see Mildred McElroy again, though, if it is within my power to prevent it. He will meet her here somewhere, though, on these newspapers unless I can induce him to go to New York. Still, I do not know as she would care anything about him. Rumors have reached my ears that she refused to marry Charles Fontebrau—and poor Charles is everything one could expect in a man of his years; but he has not the dollar," and the broker brought his white-cuffed wrist down heavily on the arm of the mahogany chair.

"A great surprise I would spring on these fellows to marry such a beautiful flower, and a woman who will some day be a glorious light in the world of letters. And would it not be a just reward for all I have suffered? Oh! my early life—I could never live through its torture again!

CHAPTER XXX.

TOGETHER ON THE PRESS.

"I thank the heavens that I have now found my calling, wherein with or without perceptible results I am minded diligently to preserve."

After leaving the University Mildred did not begin work as a regular reporter, but obtained a position with one of the large Court Reporting firms as assistant, and devoted some time to working on one of the evening papers. She knew that by faithfully persisting in this course for a few months or a year she would become better fitted to perform the arduous duties which would fall to her as a reporter on any one of the large Chicago papers.

Once again in the City Hall and County Building, it renewed many associations for her former stenographic life. She inquired for Miss Villegas, and was told that she had been sent recently to the Philippine Islands as Government clerk. A friend handed Mildred a letter, which had been written previous to her departure across the Pacific, which had been misdirected and consequently never reached its destination. Miss Villegas

had noted in it many items of interest relating to her work, but at the end Mildred read through tear stains:

"Although you may never have known it, Miss McElroy, I have loved Mr. Longstreet right along —from the first day I ever saw him, and now that he is married, you can imagine how blinded, how stunned I am—how torn and bleeding is my heart, and I am glad, indeed, to drown the engulfing sadness in a foreign land."

In the months which followed Mildred met again Arthur Fairfield in the literary and press clubs of the city, and she noted how very anxious he was to renew their acquaintanceship; he had been so glad to know that she understood his work, and when in the course of a conversation he asked her if she wrote for the Evening Post, she was convinced that he remembered the Illinois Central train incident as well as she had. There was something which seemed to draw them closer to one another—something even more than the fact that they were advocates of the same profession. Yet, Arthur Fairfield, fearing that Mildred McElroy did not care for him, strived to keep it from her that he really did, and she in turn, thinking perhaps he did not care as she did, concealed it in hopes that Arthur Fairfield would never know; still neither could resist the tempta-

tion of one another's society. The more Arthur Fairfield learned of Mildred's energy and desire to be a factor in the newspaper world, the more interested he became in her welfare and found himself at times more ready to do for her than for himself; and when at last an opening was made on the newspaper on which he was Chief Reporter, he spoke to the Editor of Mildred, and succeeded in getting her into the Post. But his interest in her never tempted him to shield her from any of the hard tasks, which, if accomplished, he knew would be the means of her gaining promotions. He examined her work with close scrutiny, severely criticising it if it deserved and praising it if it so warranted; and, on the other hand, Mildred experienced no greater delight than to hand in an extraordinarily well-written article.

Although Mildred was fast gaining a commendable record, both as a journalist and a reporter, at times she often felt the narrowness and hunger of the world—the world that had no interest in her except a passing one. She ofttimes asked herself who would ever reap the harvest of her work, and what a long time even until these efforts would bear fruit. She wondered if she had drawn the outline for her course in life in the right way, and what Arthur Fairfield's ideas of

an exalted higher existence were, and if he did not long for the association of some one closer than a friend, as she sometimes did. If he found so much to confide in her, why would he not find help and strength in an intelligent wife, and why had he not found this individual before?

It was at this time, too that Mildred realized it was not long until she would have reached her ultimatum—that time in life which permits us to sit down and rest. It is then we will think of those who in our past life we may have thoughtlessly discarded because we thought we would meet another if we would wait, some other who would offer us still more than the present one could. Ah! what feverish days. When we knew not what true affection meant and stretched our will-power until every fiber of it groaned under the weight of its oppression, for if God created us to love another, we will love them, in spite of all that in life may come between; but every day must have its sunset, and across ours we will see the rain-drops softly fall, and we will then wish we had never severed that attachment, for we smothered our feelings for rank and prestige and cannot do so now. We will think of that other and wonder if they have married some one else, or if they have joined that legion which sleep peacefully, not solicitous of earthly things. We

will then wish we had never believed in a Platonic friendship with that one in whom we could not help but place our hopes, and with a wearily-drawn breath turn to devote our efforts to the world, for well we know that if we tried to love another we could not do so and be happy.

It was in this way Mildred looked on the present and mused on the future. Why did she care, she thought, what Arthur Fairfield thought of her? Why did she value his opinion so much—and if he did not love her—how rash it was to be following a delusion?

She was thinking of these things to-night as she sat with Arthur Fairfield, and when she spoke of what might be open to her in fields farther away, he leaned forward in the moonlight to scan her face, but she involuntarily turned away from him.

"After all that I have done for you, Mildred, would you leave? It has hurt me to see you work alone, and I have wanted—Oh! so much, to lift the heavy burden from your young shoulders, not with the object of deterring you in your work, but only to help you, and then let you go on just in the same way as before."

"But, Mr. Fairfield, I might do better were I left to rely on myself than to——"

"Than to let me protect you for——" And

Arthur Fairfield drew Mildred McElroy to him. "You love me, Mildred; you will not tell me that you do not. You have talked to me in this way because you fear that I do not care for you, for I have blindly kept it from you; but, Oh! how could you think I did not love you. We have never had occasion to question each other's views in anything, and why should not our life be one grand ethereal sacrifice for one another? We will realize the grandeur of such a union in after years even more than we do now. You are satisfied, Mildred, tell me?"

He lifted the flushed face close to his own, and when Mildred's eyes looked into his it was to tell him that she did not doubt his promise.

And little did she dream that it might fade away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BROKER'S DELUSION.

"It is certainly getting serious," thought the broker, "and it seems to me at times I cannot give her up. Why has she so crept into my heart? It seems everything went right when she was here. Really I believe her influence had much to do with my success. I have missed her in so many ways since she has left me. And—if 'twere only some one else who loved her—any one but Arthur—it would not be so hard to break it up. I have cherished the hope of her so long, that simply to think of her is an inspiration to my work. I cannot think of any reason, either, why she should not care for me. She seemed to feel badly the last day she left me; or, was it simply the nervousness of leaving—her own selfish interests more than mine? She does not act quite herself when I meet her at Glendowen's, and I cannot perceive whether it is because her thoughts are on me, or that my presence is annoying to her. I do not think it is possible that Arthur Fairfield is anything to her yet except a friend, but I know well that he loves her, and it will be only a mat-

ter of time until he tells her so, if he has not done so before. What her opinion of such a marriage would be I can hardly tell. I have examined closely into her writings of late, and find her thought tends toward the realistic more than the unreal, and that she invariably makes her characters give precedence to money. She most assuredly knows that Arthur Fairfield could not give her a luxurious home. Imagine him driving his wife in a landau or an automobile!" And the broker smiled half-cynically as he watched the circling wreaths of smoke from his Havana. "I dare say, Arthur's salary would not cover the cost of a chauffeur's services. Yet, statistics show that women who write do not, as a rule, marry some one befitting their rank and prestige; but, all Arthur lacks is money. He will some day throw a glorious light in the world of letters," and the broker sighed heavily as his mind dwelt upon the noble youth in whom he had placed so many hopes, and whom he feared he was beginning to think of as a rival.

"I can only let things come and go as they will," he murmured, half-aloud, "and if I see any further developments of a threatening nature I will plan some scheme by which they will be burst asunder, for I cannot afford to sacrifice my own happiness. Many times in life we are forced to

do things which hurt us in order that we may get that which it is just and right for us to possess.

"But would it be that Mildred McElroy thinks I could not appreciate her efforts as Arthur would do? I will settle the whole matter by simply asking her to marry me. It will be unexpected to her; at least, I think it will be. Maybe, though, she divines my thoughts more than she pretends to. It does not stand to reason she would prefer Arthur Fairfield to me. Why, how many times I have heard her express the desire to finish a University course in Milan or Madrid, and I—who can support any luxury—could I not give her the money with which to do it? It is not this alone—I can bestow upon her anything, everything—I would place upon her head a tiara of jewels—and Arthur, poor Arthur, he told me only the other day that his expenses were growing equal to his salary. It does not seem possible that a woman of her ethical vent of mind would give up to such a phantasm unless she would want to devote her life to work—her precious life that I meant to guard and protect so zealously.

"Yes, I must tell her; but when can I meet her? I have noticed that she has many engagements of late whenever I come. I wonder if she

does it to avoid my presence? She does not believe, maybe, that I could follow this occupation and understand what true grandness is in the feminine nature. Her wretched father did not possess my ideas of woman. How strange that Mildred should differ so from him. There is not the merest particle of his disposition intermingled with hers. Since her mother's death she has been lonely, and I will appear to her in a higher light when her mind is in this state than I would if there was nothing troubling her. Yes, I will bring it to a focus."

But the thought of something just then came to the broker's mind, and—Oh horrors! "But the heavens cannot reveal a secret until the day of judgment. And is there a judgment? 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word always.' Yet there is no hereafter; there is no world beyond," thought the broker. "I am merely repeating what used to fall so easily from my lips. She thinks it, though—she thinks it—Mildred McElroy, that frail, beautiful woman, whose orphan heart I long so much to cherish. Will she reprove me for not being a Christian? I have never told her that I professed any creed. I will tell her that I reverence everything that she does, and she will never find out my opinion on the subject. Glendowen annoys me when I come.

He never thinks of my being 'on the market' for anything excepting grain or railroad stocks. He had to lay matrimonial schemes himself, but I suppose he never thinks of me in that light. I will ask him to take that New York trip off my hands Wednesday, and I will see her then when things are quiet, and I can get a chance to say a few words to her alone. Can she resist me?" and the broker stood before a long mirror and gazed at an olive brow, large, piercing gray eyes, which threw forth melting glances, and a gracefully-poised head, over which blue-black hair lay in masses. The stately form fell back in the chair, and Malcolm Montgomery said decisively: "I am a man of strong character upon whom any woman might be proud to lean; Arthur Fairfield is a boy."

When Malcolm Montgomery was announced in the drawing-room that evening Mildred came down reluctantly. It had been some time since her mother's death, and she relieved the somber black by narrow bands of white at her wrists and throat. She drew her chair close beside the blazing coal fire, and asked why she had not seen him in such a long time.

"A long time, Miss McElroy," said the broker; "did you wish it shorter?"

And never did this man seem so strangely magnetic as he was to-night.

"It seemed a little long, and then I have not done as much writing, which has made me miss my really existing friends."

Mildred knew him to be always anxious to see anything which she had written, and rose to bring him the last number of a journal in which was one of her best productions. The broker took it from her and read with a pretended interestedness, while, in the meantime, his brain whirled in a chaos of thought: "It is an absurdity; I cannot bring myself down to the humiliation. I cannot leave myself a target for scoff—a sneer for these young people. I will assume the part of a friend, and that—she will think—would be only characteristic of my nature."

And again the broker bent his will, his will which he had trained to be so intensely flexible, and Mildred did not know that within his heart was burning the fire of selfishness which was being fed to the highest ardor by worldly avarice when he asked her as to her approaching marriage with Arthur Fairfield.

She was somewhat surprised at the question, and replied:

"Then Arthur has told you?"

"Yes, of course, Arthur has told me. He even asked my advice before his engagement, and you

can guess, Miss McElroy, what I told him." And with a friendly smile Malcolm Montgomery bade her good-night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OLD, OLD CAPER.

The night following the broker threw himself into a chair, murmuring: "I cannot think it is a reality—I cannot think I have been foiled. It was only until I began to foster the hope that one day Mildred McElroy would be my wife that I could see the world held anything for me but a mockery, and now—now it is all ended; and so much harder to be 'a spectator of other men's fortunes' after I have lost her. Yet, there is a chance still. If I could make her believe"—and a slow evolution of thought was stealing through Malcolm Montgomery's mind.

"I will convince Arthur that Mildred McElroy does not love him; that she has deceived him, and he, who has always believed all I have ever told him, will not fail to give credence to what I tell him now."

And then the broker thought of the brilliant young journalist—thought how in days gone by he had never wished the covetous world to harm him by a single word, and now he was preparing

to perform one of the most unpardonable wrongs that man could commit against fellow-man—endeavoring to take from him the woman whom he loved. But the man thought on: "It is only a few people who cannot forget some one whom they have loved. I could not forget because I know the world so well that when I find some one whom I think worthy of my attachment I am not easily turned away."

"A gentleman to see you, Mr. Montgomery," said the maid. "Shall I send him up?"

"Yes, Bertha, right along, answered the broker.

There was a light step on the stair, and the man half-guessed who it was.

"Am going over to Powers," said Arthur Fairfield, "and thought I would break in on your bachelor reveries by asking you to go with me. Mildred went to St. Louis yesterday, so I am rather lonesome."

At the mention of the name "Mildred" the broker's face darkened.

"You look gloomy, dear Montgomery," said the journalist; "has anything 'run under'?"

"No, my boy," answered the man. "Ten thousand yesterday on Amalgamated. Is not that enough to make a fellow feel in high spirits?" And for a moment the broker's eyes flashed as he thought of his hoard of money.

"There is no doubt you have 'struck it lucky,'" answered Arthur Fairfield, "but why, then, are you sad?"

"Because, Arthur," answered the man, "I am sorry for you. There is something I must tell you which I know will break in upon your serene mind in a frightful way. Then, too, I fear you will think me at fault when I am not. Do you not know that Mildred McElroy does not love you?"

"Mildred McElroy not love me?" said the young man, astounded. "Not love me—who has been telling you such stuff. Really, I think you are so fearful lest anything should harm me that you allow yourself to listen to incredible tales."

"Oh! Arthur," said the man—"but the worst has not been told you. It is I who loves Mildred McElroy, and I have just reason to know my love is reciprocated. Did such thought never cross your mind, Arthur? Mildred McElroy is no insipid girl—she is a woman—a woman who has seen and met many men, those who possess intellect, those who possess money, and those who possess both."

"But," said the young man, with a despairing look, "I cannot believe it. Mildred McElroy, who has told me she loved no other, could not deceive me in this way—Oh! Malcolm Montgomery, how

can I think she has deserted me, she whom I crowned as the model of womanhood?"

"Ah!" said the broker, "we can all change our minds, and neither must you blame Mildred McElroy. Money has been denied her in her young years. She looks upon it now as an idyl. You cannot give it to her, my boy, and you should not have asked her to be your wife—you should not have presumed to do it; it was too much to ask for. She may love you, Arthur, in some ways better than she does me, but can you censure her for not wanting to put her life in the keeping of one who possesses naught but his intellect? Dissatisfaction would only be the result.

"Come, Arthur," he continued, advancing, and laying his hand on his shoulder, "I wish you would not let those grewsome thoughts prey upon your mind. Be glad of my good success!"

But Arthur Fairfield only shook his head gloomily, and murmured: "I am unwilling to believe it; a dazed sort of feeling seizes on me."

"Yet why do you press me further?" said the broker. "Will I have to show you the letter and the lock of hair like they do in the novels?"

Then the broker opened the private drawer of his desk, and on a narrow piece of white linen paper the young man read:

"Dear Malcolm:

"You ask me if I am to marry Arthur Fairfield. How can you think I would for one moment cherish the thought of giving up my precious career to a struggling journalist? Yet Arthur does not know this. I have not the strength to tell him. Mildred."

The letter was not written with the pen—nothing but the signature, and that surely was hers. It never flashed upon Arthur Fairfield that it could be false. He did not know that Malcolm Montgomery had taken the paper upon which Mildred had thoughtlessly written her name, had inserted it in the typewriter and written upon it the few words which meant so much to Arthur Fairfield. It was an easy matter, yet Arthur never questioned but that the note came from Mildred McElroy's hand, and so the broker knew.

"I once asked her, Arthur, if she loved you—it was after she had promised to be my wife, for I thought that if she did I would persuade her to marry the man whom she really loved, rather than to make her life wretched just for the sake of money, and I—I would have been willing to have abided by it and suffered just as I have many times during life—But you see it clearly now."

The young man gave back the letter, and then said, with deliberation: "You love her?"

"Love her," answered the broker, "who could not love her? She is young, beautiful and intellectual; she is all that man could ask for in woman. She may have faults, and one of those faults might be the tendency to trifle with the hearts of others; but this is a frailty to which many of us are susceptible. Sometimes it is inborn in us, and we cannot help it. I never told you that her father killed my sister—he made her think he loved her—just as Mildred McElroy has made you think she loves you."

"Oh! Malcolm Montgomery!" exclaimed Arthur Fairfield, "it seems I cannot stay longer in this city in which nothing seems left for me now but wretchedness. It would tear my heart to see her again. How I wish I had never left the East! I would never have seen her had I stayed there, and would have never known this sorrow. I wish you had let me struggled my way alone and not indulged me in so much , for you have placed me in your debt by so doing. I came back to Chicago because I thought you wished it, and now—what has it brought to me?"

"You are troubled," said the broker, "and that is why you talk in this manner. When I gave you the money with which to complete a college course and to help you gain an established footing on the press it was done generously, and for no

other motive than that I might have the companionship of aspiring youth—some one who would be worthy of my confidence and assistance. It was not until I saw Mildred McElroy that I ever cared for any woman, and nothing could hurt me more, Arthur, than to see you take this so hard. If you feel like leaving Chicago now I would not wish to deter you. You will have no difficulty, I am sure, in gaining a firm foot-hold on some of the Eastern newspapers and, although it may not prove to be as prominent a position as the one you are holding here, you will feel better to be away, and will see qualities in some other whom you will learn to love just as you have Mildred McElroy."

The young man's truthful black eyes looked into the broker's uncertain gray ones. Then he answered, "Never," and was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PARTED LOVERS.

"Turn not away Thy face from me in the day when I am troubled; incline Thine ear unto me."

Mildred was to have submitted this morning an important article, and Arthur had told her Sunday to lay aside the copy and they would review it at an early hour the next day in the press-room. So Mildred sat down to her breakfast a little earlier than her usual hour, and tore open the wrapper on a copy of the Junior Journalist, which lay beside her plate. It was a heartrending quotation which she read on its frontispiece—from that quaint New England poet, Emily Dickinson:

"We shall know why when time is over, and we have
ceased to wonder why,
God will explain our anguish in the fair school-room of
the sky."

Yet much as it impressed her, Mildred thought of it idly, for she had no anguish. She had nothing about which to wonder why. Just then her eyes fell upon the unopened letter which had lain underneath the Journal. Wondering from whom

it could be, she began to read it—but the handwriting—the handwriting—whose was it but Arthur Fairfield's? Tremblingly, with blurred vision, she struggled to read the few words before her:

"Mildred:

"While you read this a Pennsylvania Special will be bearing me far from you. It is unnecessary for me to tell you why I go, for you know better than I my reasons for so doing. Oh! Mildred, you have hurt me—not for one day, but for a lifetime. A. F."

Ah! Mildred, do you succumb to such a sorrow as this in the manner that most women do—a sorrow which breaks in with such a vengeance upon your placidness of mind? Glance at the mirror yonder. Close your eyes and fold your hands. It is just as well to push aside that note and say: "I will forget it." Take up your work in the same manner as you have done before, but alone, alone—yet, the Angel of Consolation reprimands you. She whispers that God will help you. The same old energy comes back. See how well the work of to-day can be done, full of gratitude for Him above, who has seen fit to send all afflictions.

No one could have told Arthur Fairfield this.

No one, Mildred thought, whom she knew, could have defiled himself so much as to say she belonged to that class of women whom she condemned—the artful and deceitful. Had not Arthur Fairfield often read the editorials she had written upon this subject? Did he not know how much she detested this action in man, more so in woman, who should be the herald of virtue and truth?

Then she thought of Malcolm Montgomery; but, ah! he loved Arthur Fairfield, she thought, and whom we love we cannot hurt.

Yet now and then thoughts surged through her brain that the broker might have told him she was deceptive, with his own selfish purpose in view; but she thought this selfishness had not fastened itself upon him with much strength, although something told her that there might be lingering hopes in Malcolm Montgomery's mind that if he could represent that Arthur did not love her, and simply took a seemingly legitimate means of telling her of his departure she would soon learn to realize that one who would prove so unfaithful would not be worth remembering and would by her soon be forgotten.

But she put the broker from her mind and only asked herself why Arthur Fairfield did not at least come and tell her all. He had known her

so long—so long. Ah! it was a cruel blow, for she had learned to look to Arthur Fairfield for so much help; and now that help had been taken from her, that help which she would have never missed had it not once been given her.

She saw some one else in the Chief Reporter's chair. She saw him severely criticising her descriptions and questioning the authenticity of her verbatim reports. She saw herself being assigned to work which Arthur Fairfield would have never thought of giving her. She heard him telling her she must consent to do subordinate work until she would be prepared to fill even the place in which she now was; she heard him tell the editor that she had been favored by Arthur Fairfield and promoted to a round in the ladder of journalism which she was not capable of filling.

Yet, Mildred knew she must not picture the falling of this shadowy curtain. She must only live over again for a while those struggling childhood years. She must think that the world would miss her were she gone—and then—she would have, indeed, a great purpose to live for. She would not permit this act of Arthur Fairfield's to be even a chapter in her life—only a paragraph, which, being insipid and shallow, necessitated

her throwing it out, for in her pure and faithful work there was no place for it. She would be thankful then, and doubly thankful when she thought of those who could not throw it out—those who had put their hearts wholly in the keeping of another.

Again her mind dwelt upon that Psalm which had so often brought comfort to her in trouble; and she knew it would bring it again:

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

So again she learned to drink at the Spring of Consolation, and lifted her eyes heavenward as if in hope of seeing Him who lent his promise; for she was in the midst of trouble, and she leaned upon that right hand for she knew it would save her.

She kept the article which Arthur Fairfield was to have corrected with her—that article which was written upon "The Reciprocal Duties of Man and Women", and if she had only known where Arthur Fairfield was, she would have sent him that manuscript, and when he broke its seal and saw the pages which the pen had never touched save for the few corrections made by his own

hand at the top, she knew he would love her as he used to, for this would be enough.

But Mildred knew not, nor could she ever hope to know, where Arthur Fairfield was.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RESIGNATION.

"The road is clear now," thought the broker in the night Arthur Fairfield left. "She will, no doubt, ask me to help her penetrate the matter, and I must be prepared to do nothing which would give me away. I shall have to be deeply sympathetic, dignified, and do nothing except with the utmost reserve, because I know she does not fully realize now, and it will take her some time to do so, that he is lost to her forever; and if I pressed matters too quickly she might think it was I who influenced Arthur Fairfield. I will wait a few months and then I can perfect my plans. She will find a certain exultation, too, in possessing so much wealth, for what one is there of us, who, after being hurt, does not long for satisfaction? And Mrs. Malcolm Montgomery—what an air of aristocracy the very name imparts. But I will watch her very closely"—and the broker's face grew darker—"and if I see there would be absolutely no use in asking her, why I suppose I might better give it up than to stoop to take a refusal. I could not undergo it; my

pride would quell under its very mediocrity; but she will not look upon me with disfavor. I am confident that Mildred McElroy loves me."

But when Mildred related to him all that had occurred, and asked if he thought there would be no hope of ascertaining where Arthur Fairfield was, and while he noted the pleading, careworn look which was fastening itself upon her face it wrung his conscience. She spoke of how in after years she might see him; of how she could in no way forget him; of her desire to be correspondent in some foreign country—anything she said which would smooth the few short remaining years, and then—surely she would know all in the world beyond.

And when the broker heard all this, his heart sank heavier and he knew how useless it would be to even wait.

Yet so artfully had he concealed his thoughts from Mildred that if at any time she thought it possible he might have been concerned in what had happened, she had ceased to think so now, for the broker had hid everything just as he had planned to do if he found Fate against him, "for would it not be better," thought he, "to be Mildred McElroy's friend than her enemy?"

So slight furrows came in Mildred's young brow, and silvery cords mingled themselves with

those of sunnier hue, and all because she could not forget, and when a year had passed—a year from that very night which was the happiest in her life, she rested again in those anxious, willing arms and looked into those earnest, pleading eyes which made her say: "Arthur, I cannot give you up."

But how things had changed. And she had planned to do so much—so much that she could never do alone. They had thought to have edited a newspaper together; to have achieved the greatest things possible for toilers on the press of America—but now—where was Arthur Fairfield?

Did he ever say: "Where is Mildred McElroy?" or, did he love another? Mildred only crushed these thoughts from her, and when she saw those outstretched arms and the broad shoulder to which he drew her head, not in a boyish way, but with all the tenderness and firmness of manhood, she only pressed her pen closer to the paper and struggled to write. Ah! and how hard it was to write without him and write well; for there are two kinds of writing. One is simply to write—to write what one has to; the other is to write that which will gain commendation. And Mildred did not wish the work which came from her pen to fall unnoticed; but there was no such thing as ever seeing Arthur Fairfield again. He

was gone. Still, she could not forget the many times those trusting black eyes had looked down into hers and told her to rest, and she had done so, for there was something so commanding, so gentle in those words; but no one told her to rest now. The proud, listless ship of the sky sailing above and the cooing of the turtle-doves below in their cots only served to recall taunting days which she would fain forget. The waves of the untroubled waters beyond lapped against the gray stones of the breakwater, and sobbed a little plaintively over the iron bands which spanned the sea edge. And then she thought of the many times she had watched that same moonlit water with Arthur Fairfield and noticed not the sobbing of the blue, half-warm waves, for they held no melancholy secret for her then.

And just now a sweet rhythm of chimes broke in upon the growing night and clanged warningly from the old brown-stone church's turret. It was for the last service, and Mildred turned her steps toward its ivy-covered walls to kneel again in prayer and ask what she had many times done before—the righting of a grievous wrong.

"Miss McElroy"—and in a moment a girl's arm was within hers. "I was on my way to Vesper and thought I would ask you to go with me if you did not have a Bible class to teach to-night

in your own church. I must have your advice on an awful grave subject."

Mildred scanned Alice Creighton's youthful face, only to find a look of deep anxiety upon it. The little heiress is older now than when we saw her in the broker's office some years ago, there being a womanly demeanor combined with the girlish attitude, and Mildred felt a certain sense of grandeur in listening to her relate her tale of trouble which she so willingly poured into her ear.

"Miss McElroy," she continued, "you must not mention it to anyone, because Cousin Malcolm opposes me so, but I want to marry Charles Fontebrau, and don't you think it is better for me to than to die heartbroken? Oh! he is so promising, so intelligent, and the only reason Cousin Malcolm does not want me to marry him is that he hasn't money; and I—I would love him if he did not have a dollar. Then, too, he is going back to New Orleans to practice law and that pleases me so much, for I love my people, and I think Charles loves me better because of this fact. Southerners are so loyal to their own. It seems we were predestined for one another, although my church teaches me to believe not in this doctrine.

"I once read a fortune tale which told me I

would marry a Northern man, and Charles answers this description just exactly, too; it said he once loved another, but had forgotten all about her; and just for curiosity's sake I asked Charles if he ever had a sweetheart other than I, and he looked at me so earnestly and laughed, but did not say either way. Do you suppose, Miss McElroy, that he ever has had, and if he did, would it matter?

Mildred patiently listened to it all, and then gently assured her that it would be well to forget the gypsy's warning, because if Charles Fontebrau ever did love another she was either dead or long since forgotten. She told her not to care what Cousin Malcolm thought of him, and to be ever mindful of her own happiness.

When a few months later she received the announcement card of a New Orleans wedding, she looked forward to the southward journey with pleasure, for there was gratification at seeing the happiness of others, even though to her the days were only sorrow-laden, still cutting with Remembrance's scythe her young, undying love, yet failing each time they tried to bind its scattered sheaves when he who owned the harvest came not to lay his claim.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A CONVERSION.

"I expect to pass through the world but once; if, therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

"What has it availed me?" thought the broker, as he rolled up the cover of his desk. "It has not made her love me. She persists in remembering him, even though she has every proof that he has been false to her. How could I ever have thought she meant to offer me anything but friendship? Friendship—what a mocking word it is! Once I thought if she were to die, I could never survive it, but now—what would Death be? What a soothing, satisfying thing it is! What a solace it would be to look at her dead and silent."

"Call!"—the broker turned and saw a Western Union messenger boy.

"You are at your wit's end this morning, lad," said the man, as he wrote on a telegraph blank:

"Northern Pacific 109. Market steady. Advise buying 5000 shares."

"Here, here, Western Union," said the bookkeeper as he clutched the blue shoulder. "Let me see that. Why, Montgomery, where is your head. That message was sent at four o'clock last night and an answer received before you went home."

"H'm, I do remember now," said the broker, pushing his hat back on his head. "I was thinking I had not sent it."

"You are not well, anyway," answered the bookkeeper; "your face is ghastly and your pulse beating wildly. I know that you are threatened with a fever. Suppose I order a carriage to take you to the hospital; there would be no use of your going home; you would not get the right kind of medical assistance there."

"Maybe you are right, Jackson," answered the man. "I hope, though, it is nothing serious."

"My judgment was correct in thinking you should come here," said the bookkeeper, when the carriage stopped before the hospital and he noticed in what a feeble, termbling manner the broker walked up the steps.

"But you will keep things in line, Jackson, until I get back," he said faintly, after ordering a room from the sister at the door.

"Do not worry about buying stocks. Get better," and the bookkeeper pressed his hand.

When the consulting physician pronounced the

disease which had taken such a firm hold on the man, "typhoid fever," Malcolm Montgomery's face grew whiter than the pillows, and neither did the days which followed restore a life-like color. The physicians could have no hope when the patient exhibited no desire to get better, and the nurses reported no encouraging results.

It was late one afternoon when the house doctor stood in the door of the sick man's room and remarked to his sister: "It is the worst case on this floor, Katharine. The man's mind wanders so, and he talks on such strange subjects. At times, though, he is perfectly rational, yet seems to long for some one who will counsel him, and what he wants counsel on is more than I can divine. He is rich, very rich, a stock broker, I think they say. There are a few immediate friends who come to see him, but for to relieve him in the way of which I have spoken their efforts are of no avail.

"His name?" said Katherine Marsden.

"Montgomery," answered the Doctor.

"Montgomery!" exclaimed the woman. "Why, Harry, I know he is one of the Montgomerys I knew long ago in New Haven. His countenance seemed familiar, but of course I could not place him after all these years—he has changed so much. Dear little Flora's brother! And to be

sure he is a broker. Many times the boy has told me of his dreams of Wall or La Salle street."

"Then, Katherine," said the Doctor, "a few kind words from you might help him, and he would, no doubt, be glad to see you. I really believe something dreadful is preying on the man's mind, and when this delirium has passed, if I think his condition warrants, I want you to go to him."

"It is too bad I have not more time," thought the woman, who was taking an important part at a meeting of the National Federation of Teachers, which was held in Chicago. "But I will let some matters go which are not of so much gravity and see him, for it would be more satisfaction to me to gather one faltering soul into the fold of that Great Federation above than attending all the federations that could be held on this earth."

And Katherine Marsden saw Malcolm Montgomery and told him of old times in New Haven, and the sick man stretched out his hand and grasped hers warmly.

"Oh, yes, Miss Marsden," he said feebly, "I remember you, and most of all the comments you used to make on my essays. And you are doing that yet?"

"Yes," said the teacher gently, "and I suppose

I shall continue to do it until I am transferred to the schoolroom to which we must all some time go."

"Yet, it was Flora," the sufferer went on, "who loved you even more than I. You know of her death?" and the man folded his thin hands together wearily.

"Oh, yes," answered the teacher, "but you must not talk of that now, Malcolm. She is so much better off—so much better off than either you or I. Oh, yes; I loved the child, and ofttimes reprove myself for wanting her to live in this wicked world just that she might be with me."

"But, Miss Marsden, Miss Marsden," said the man, "Flora did not die as most of us die; she pined away; her heart was broken by a wretch, torn and broken. No one could realize how it hurt me then. Father in such a helpless condition, and so much devolving upon me—and then all the hopes I had put in Flora shattered in that way. Miss Marsden, it was something which you yourself could not forgive, had you ever lived through it."

"Malcolm," answered the woman, "it hurts me to hear you talk in this manner. You must think that perhaps there are some who once bore the same sorrow that you had, and yet they bore it—and with God's help will bear all like sorrows

with a Christian resignation. I knew Willard McElroy's nature even better than you, Malcolm, for I once knew his father—once knew him in the same way your sister did his only son, and in my mind—I cannot tell you for how long—there existed an empty space, but the years have filled it with good doings, until now my heart is welling with praises of Him who has seen fit to send all these things."

"Such talk is fruitless to one like me," said the broker; "I cannot forgive such acts. Oh! when I live over such a life a frenzy seizes on my soul."

"You know not the ways of the Christian." answered the teacher, "you have never learned to lean upon an arm which you cannot see. There is a gentle solace in this sort of help. When once we learn to realize what it is, all earthly help seems weak and futile, and we wonder why it is we never thought to lean before. Then, too, why do you talk of revenging the departed. 'Revenge is mine,' saith the Lord."

"I do not think, Miss Marsden," answered the man faintly, "that I will realize what earthly things are much longer. I think it is only the matter of a few days until I am in that world which I have every reason to believe there exists, because as for an Ever-Seeing Being—I once

thought it was a boy—but a boy's thoughts are not original; he only thinks what someone else has instilled into his young veins."

The teacher's face grew sad, for she was thinking—thinking of those days in New Haven when Malcolm Montgomery was only a schoolboy and had handed to her his essay on "The Storm." The boyish words expressed that if there were no other fact to prove the existence of an Omnipotence, the awe-struck feeling which the storm inspires in us all was enough to prove it; and how this simple, crude, childish philosophy had preyed upon the teacher's soul. But now the boy was gone. She was at the deathbed of the man, and all these faithful thoughts of his had fled. She could not refrain, though, from telling him of the simple incident, and while the man listened he turned his head as if in an effort to forget past things.

"In my life, Miss Marsden," said the broker when he spoke again, "there has been something which has killed that belief. Something—that even though I wished it—prevents my believing that I could ever embrace the Christian faith. Then, too, what is there in the Bible to strengthen a man who for years has not been able to read a word of Scripture except with disgust? There is nothing to lean on in those pages."

"Ah! Malcolm," said the teacher "have you not thought upon the words: 'Though my sins be red as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow?' "

"Yes," answered the sick man, "but if He wishes us to be free of sin why does He send us those dreadful afflictions which would make any man sin?"

"Yet you know the rest," answered Katherine Marsden: 'Though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him."

The man did not speak again. He was only thoughtful. "If—if these sins could be forgiven," he was thinking; "if there really is 'more joy in heaven o'er one repentant sinner than ninety-nine just,' " and the broker sank back. "I heard them say last night there was no hopes of my getting better. I—there is a strange feeling comes over a man's soul if—if he has time to realize he must leave this world in only a few hours. I wish I could relieve myself of them in any way. Oh! if there was only someone to tell them to—someone who would never tell another—I might—"

And at five o'clock Katharine Marsden stole into the room and placed upon the table a crucifix.

"When will he come?" said the broker. "Draw the curtain and let me see if the day has yet faded."

But the gentle woman only pulled the lace closer and said softly: "I can hear his footstep now;" and she pressed between the thin hands a small morocco book, and stamped upon it in gold letters the broker read, "The Key of Heaven."

The priest was left alone—left alone with a man upon whose shoulders the heavy weight of sin was resting, "but I will relieve him," thought the man of God, "just as I have relieved many others;" so he knelt and prayed that the sinner might tell him all, all that in this life he should not have done.

When the house physician came in an hour later the patient slept, and upon his face was imprinted the insigna of silent, waiting hope, and he was breathing lightly as if his thoughts were on that land to which he must soon go.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

UNITED.

"Where am I?" said Malcolm Montgomery. "I have been waiting all this time for Mildred McElroy to write a wire."

"You are in a weak condition," answered the nurse, "and must not allow business affairs to interfere with your getting better. It is now near morning, and you have been in this unconscious state since midnight."

"But I was thinking, thinking of something I must do. Do not fail to send these two messages," he continued, as he scribbled a few words on the piece of paper he had requested the nurse to bring him. "Do not fail me, I cannot die without seeing them. Oh! and I am so much weaker, so much weaker this morning." The man's voice died into a whisper; he closed his eyes and only stirred upon the pillows at the tinkling of a soft bell announcing the approach of the Sacred Host. In a moment the halls were silent. The white-capped sisters preceded the young priest. Softly they entered that magnificent chamber, and in the dim candle light knelt by the bedside

of the dying; "Domine non sum dignus." Malcolm Montgomery clasped his hands, and while he prayed that that one and last request would be granted two messages were flashing over the wires.

And twenty hours from the time a Western Union lad entered the pressroom of one of New York's largest dailies the return limited had brought Arthur Fairfield again to Chicago. Hastily he ordered a carriage. "To the St. ——'s Hospital," he said to the driver, and was hurried swiftly away.

Dim lights stole from the broad windows of the great building, and mingled with the breaking lines of day, which slanted over the granite, while in their blended light the blue-coated officer silently kept his vigil. "You have only a few moments left," said the sister, as she led the way down the corridor. "The Last Sacrament has again been administered."

Arthur Fairfield entered the room where on the snow white linen the broker lay dying. "I knew you would come, Arthur," he said weakly, as he stretched out his thin, white hand. I knew it would not be denied me. But Mildred—she is not here—yet, if I—if I should go before she comes you will not forget to tell her all. Oh, I have sinned, Arthur, and doubly so, and the sor-

row I have brought upon you was the outcome of a sordid, warped ambition. I thought I could not give her up, and so much did my selfishness enwrap me that I realized not the greatness of my sin. Ah! and Arthur, you never knew my early life; you never knew its torn and shattered days; you never knew what made me such a cold and hardened wretch. No, you never knew her, my sweet, gentle sister. She was not strong like Mildred. You know the rest, Arthur, I killed him. Yes, I killed Mildred McElroy's father. And when I am gone, Arthur—you hear me—all I have is yours. It will help to comfort you, and Mildred, too. I know you love her. Glendowen has been with me during the past few days, and has attended to all business matters. He knows my financial condition, but nothing more."

Not until the morning twilight had faded did Arthur Fairfield give up his watch over the dying man—the man who in his boyhood days had brought him so much happiness, and in manhood so much sorrow.

"The end is near," said the physician to Mr. Glendowen, as he drew away Arthur's hand from that of the sufferer's, who just then struggled as if to speak.

"Give him, O Lord, eternal rest, and let per-

petual light shine unto him. May he rest in peace."

The young priest has been speaking. This is the last.

"We will go home now, Arthur," whispered the broker's friend. "You are worn out. I have telephoned the house," he continued, "and we are expecting Mildred at any time. She has been in Detroit. I will not rebuke you now, Arthur, for the rash act you have done. You have suffered far too much.

"Mildred is here, Arthur," said Mrs. Glendowen softly, as she laid her hand upon the young man's shoulder. "Can you see her?"

"Can I see her, Mrs. Glendowen?" he repeated, as he sunk into a chair in that familiar library to wait for the one who a year ago he thought to have parted from for the last time.

The door opened and Arthur Fairfield took Mildred McElroy in his arms, whispering to her the simple words: "It is all over."

THE END.

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